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ON THE COVER: New wing of Powell Elementary School, by ISTUDIO Architects. Photo © Anice Hoachlander/Hoachlander Davis Photography

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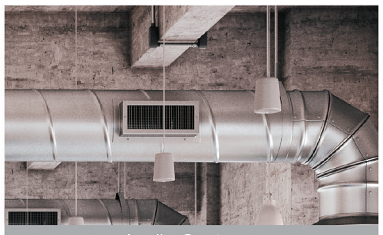
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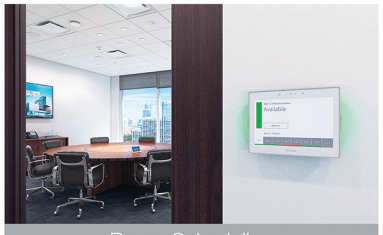
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DESIGN FOR ALL


Bradley W. Johnson

The Bauhaus school of modern design, whose 100th anniversary is now upon us, might seem at first to have little direct meaning for our lives today. But if you own a smart phone or have shopped for furniture or housewares at a store like IKEA, then your life has been affected by the legacy and continued influence of the Bauhaus.

Founded in Germany by architect Walter Gropius, the Bauhaus movement melded art—a field previously associated with the upper classes—with craft and mass production, with the aim of producing functional, beautifully simple, and affordable designs for society as a whole. The Bauhaus's key message was that art and design—including architecture—are for all.

Washington's leading example of Bauhaus-influenced civic architecture—the Martin Luther King, Jr., Public Library—was designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, who had been the last director of the Bauhaus before it was shut down by the Nazis in 1933. When the library opened in 1972, it was a controversial addition to the city's otherwise neoclassical stock of public buildings. The library's current renovation, which is being overseen by Washington-based OTJ Architects as executive architects and the Dutch firm Mecanoo as consulting design architects, will provide much-needed upgrades to the building's interior and add a new terrace level on top.

Welcome!

As noted elsewhere in this issue, public libraries are a quintessential expression of American democracy—buildings that, by design, are there for the betterment of all individually and as members of a democratic society. The significant investment that the city is making in renovating the MLK library building and in constructing or renovating branch libraries in other parts of town is a vote of confidence in that democratic tradition—a gift we give to ourselves, and to our children. As with the Bauhaus movement, the vision animating this effort is that these buildings are there for all of us.

From its inception, this magazine has pursued a similar vision. *ARCHITECTUREDC* could easily have been a vehicle for architects to talk to one another. A number of the magazines published by local chapters of the AIA are professional publications of that kind. There's nothing wrong with that, but rather than taking that route, *ARCHITECTUREDC* was instead conceived as a vehicle for connecting the public at large to architects and architecture. The magazine's mission is to help make the craft of architecture more legible and understandable for everyone. The civic and institutional projects reviewed in this issue have a particular connection to that mission, because they are buildings that are designed for, and can be accessed by, the public at large.

To quote William Faulkner, "The past is never dead. It's not even past." And so it is with the Bauhaus. The school that gave rise to the movement was disbanded in 1933, but its influence lives on all around us. You experience it every time you type out a text message on your smart phone, use a lever-style door handle to enter a room, or prepare your dinner with a stainless-steel bowl. Today, 100 years after its founding, the Bauhaus as a formal organization is gone. But it's not dead, and it's not even past. Its message is with us now.

We hope you enjoy this issue's focus on civic and institutional buildings—structures that are meant for us all. As always, we love to hear from you, so please feel free to contact me with your comments.

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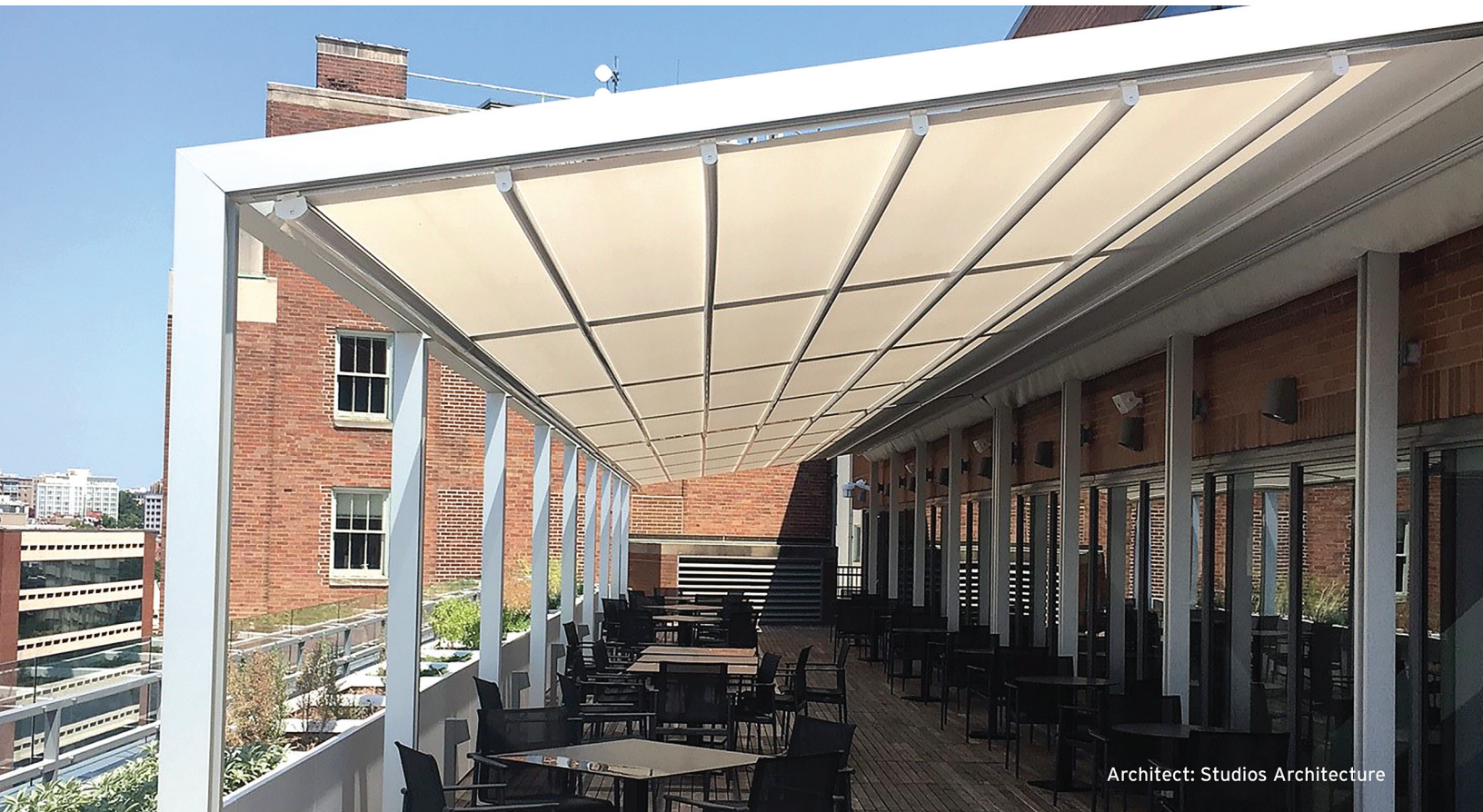
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University of Texas - Tyler
Architect: Smithgroup JJR
Location: Tyler, TX

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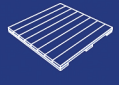
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Breath of Fresh Air

Powell Elementary Exemplifies Cutting-Edge Approaches to School Design

by Steven K. Dickens, AIA, LEED AP

Powell Elementary School draws its diverse student body from the surrounding neighborhoods of Sixteenth Street Heights, Petworth, Park View, and Columbia Heights. Following recent renovations and additions by **ISTUDIO Architects**, it now comprises four major wings, each readily identifiable both inside and out. The complex has four solar chimneys and four rooftop "learning spaces." It was not entirely surprising, then, when **Rick Harlan Schneider, AIA, APA, LEED AP**, a principal at ISTUDIO, listed four major concepts that underlie the design: Differentiated Learning, Outdoor Program, Daylighting, and Fresh Air.



The new south wing of Powell Elementary School, containing the cafeteria on the ground floor and the library on the upper level. Vertical louvers on the west-facing façade filter strong afternoon sun.

Photo © Dan Snook Photography



Horizontal louvers shield the southern façade of the new west wing from the sun.



Photo © Anice Hoachlander/Hoachlander Davis Photography



Photo © Anice Hoachlander/ Hoachlander Davis Photography

The northern façade of the new west wing, which is primarily of brick with windows grouped into large frames, complements the design of the original building, seen at left. The projecting outdoor staircase at the end provides a hint of the more animated façades toward the rear of the building.

Each of these concepts has architectural manifestations, and they overlap in various ways. This is a building that doesn't look simple and, in fact, it isn't, but ISTUDIO brought harmony to that variety, producing a building that stands out among its peers.

The story starts in the first decade of the 2000s, with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education running population projections for each public school in DC. Powell Elementary was projected to grow substantially—and the existing 45,000-square-foot facility was already overcrowded. ISTUDIO was hired in 2011 and first produced a master plan. Construction proceeded gradually, starting with relatively modest renovations to the 1959 wing, at the east side of the complex, completed in 2014, then moving to rehabilitation of the original 1929 building at the center, completed a year later. The new west classroom wing followed in 2016, and finally, in 2018, the south wing, containing a library, computer rooms, art studio, and other special spaces, was completed.

The result is something of an architectural parade. The 1929 building is a classic of the Georgian Revival style, venerable if not especially exciting. The 1959 addition is functionalist in character, though ISTUDIO's introduction of a small skylighted atrium provides some flair and an internal focal point. On the front (Upshur Street) façade, the new west wing is clearly different, with its groups of windows boxed into frames and curious chimney-like elements peeking over the roofline. Turning the corner, the architecture explodes, starting with one of the exterior stairs, continuing to the glass walls of the west and south wings. Located between these wings is a soaring atrium, with a boldly articulated steel structure, the exposed brick wall of the 1929 building to one side, and a huge sloping skylight above.

Project: Powell Elementary School,
1350 Upshur Street, NW, Washington, DC

Architects: **ISTUDIO Architects**
Structural Engineers: **Simpson Gumpertz & Heger**
MEP/F Engineers: **Setty & Associates, Ltd.**
Civil Engineers/Landscape Architects: **AMT, LLC**
Geotechnical/Hazmat Consultants: **ECS Corporate Services, LLC**
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LEED Consultant: **Dan Triman**
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Fresh Air

When ISTUDIO started the survey of the existing buildings, the architects noticed some unexpected vents in the 1929 building, long closed off. Intrigued, they explored further and discovered that the vents were at the ends of ducts leading to the attic level, where they joined and discharged at the bottom of the cupola. With the right breezes and open windows, this could provide noticeable cooling to the rooms. "It was amazing," said Schneider. "We discovered a *solar chimney*, somewhat primitive but doubtless able to provide a decent amount of cooling, before air conditioning!"

Solar chimneys rely on two basic scientific principles: First, hot air rises, and second, Nature abhors a vacuum. In the original Powell building, windows in the cupola let in sunlight, which heated the air inside. The heated air would rise, exiting via louvers in the top and creating a vacuum below. When vents in the classrooms were opened, air from the classrooms was pulled in to equalize pressure. The classroom air was then replaced by cooler air entering through north-facing windows.

During the renovation of the 1929 building, this passive ventilation system was brought back on line. It also served as inspiration for the eye-catching modern solar chimneys in the new west wing, which were engineered for top performance, as well as for a less elaborate version worked into the east wing's renovation. All the rooms served by these passive ventilation systems have notification lights that flash green when a weather station on the roof determines that the conditions are right. Aside from a damper—"the simplest of mechanical devices," said Schneider—no mechanical equipment is required.

Schneider emphasized that the solar chimneys are meant to work only in the shoulder seasons at either end of summer. However, he averred, the students know what the green light means and have become "invested" in the building's functioning; they are not simply passive customers of whatever HVAC system happens to be running.

Daylighting

Operable windows are a necessary part of the solar chimney's air flow, but of course they also offer daylighting and views. The pre-existing 1929 and 1959 wings at Powell had fairly large windows that were retained in the renovations, but the new wings incorporate much larger areas of glass that take on different forms such as the high clerestories in the library and the big skylight in the atrium. Views to the outside are emphasized—the downside of potential student distraction is regarded as minimal compared with the upside of stimulation and a sense of a school community connected to one another and to the neighborhood.

Outdoor Program

Powell's site is rather tight for a 90,000-square-foot school plus necessary playgrounds and (unfortunately equally necessary) surface parking lot for the staff, so ISTUDIO had to make the most of every square foot. (The space squeeze, in fact, forced the relocation of a community garden, which became a spinoff project for ISTUDIO: the Twin Oaks Community Garden featured elsewhere in this issue of *ARCHITECTUREDC* magazine.)



At grade level, a small playground for younger children is tucked away at the eastern side, with a large playground for the rest of the children at the west side, embraced by the glass walls and dramatic white sunscreens of the new wings. Although protected by a tall fence, the large playground opens to 14th Street and the community. At the upper roof level are "teaching gardens," reached by outdoor stairways that are also intended for student and staff use going from floor to floor. (For inclement weather, interior stair connections are of course available, but the hope is to incentivize contact with the outdoors. In almost any other school building, all the stairs would be interior.) There is also a modest balcony off the library, where one can be surrounded by a vegetated roof and overlook the larger playground.



The west wing houses classrooms on both floors, with informal outdoor learning spaces on the rooftop. Solar chimneys, which project above the roof, provide non-mechanical cooling except in the hottest weather.

Photo © Anice Hoachlander/Hoachlander Davis Photography

Differentiated Learning

All of the above features, and more, come together in the elemental yet relatively new concept that learning is optimized when there is a variety of learning environments and teaching methods. There's nothing wrong with having rows of desks facing a chalkboard, of course, but a school needs to have other types of spaces, larger and smaller—and simply different.

At Powell, the traditional classroom—an enclosed, discrete space, imbued with the sense of ownership of a specific teacher—dominates, but has flexible furniture to allow a variety of formats. Beyond the classrooms, however, one finds a wealth of options. Each classroom has a brightly-colored entrance element, with a supergraphic of the room number and a bench where a teacher could have a spontaneous moment with one or two students. There are several spaces that Schneider designates as "nooks." Two are widened areas of the second-floor corridor in the new west wing, with walls of glass looking outward and space for four to six students each. The library has a similar glassy nook overlooking the atrium.

Several classes can unite, with students sitting on the small amphitheater of the new atrium space. This of course is also where class photos are staged. The rooftop gardens offer hands-in-the-dirt lessons, quite different



Atrium of Powell Elementary School. **Photo © ISTUDIO Architects**

from noses-in-the-books, but the garden spaces are also designed to double as classrooms, also quite different from enclosed rooms. A large raised patio beside the main playground is designed for outdoor teaching areas of a variety of sizes.

Schneider views the sustainable design aspects of the building as a tool for differentiated learning: seeing passive systems at work opens doors to a range of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) investigations. Students' curiosity, he thinks, is piqued by the louvers on the façades of the new wings: horizontal on the south-facing façade, vertical over the west-facing glass of the library and cafeteria, and nonexistent at the north façade facing Upshur Street. "Why are there louvers in some places but not others? Why are they different?" Schneider imagined the children wondering. "Maybe a few students think the solar chimneys are stupid, but most of them think they're cool."

The atrium, along with a small suite of spaces including the entrance lobby and a small auditorium in the 1929 building, can be locked off from the other wings, which allows for community functions in off hours. "DCPS realizes that its schools, especially the elementary schools, become community spaces," said Schneider. "They have come to embrace this role as a way of supporting the students and their families."

Powell's student population is far from wealthy, and this has ramifications for design and layout. There are separate computer labs for adults and children, recognizing that many of the families do not have computers at home. There are also "wellness rooms" for both children and adults—the adults' room is primarily for breastfeeding. Because as many as half of the children come from homes where food is scarce, the cafeteria serves three meals a day. The public area includes a space where adults can change clothes and clean themselves, which eases the burden on parents who may be coming from or going to not-so-clean jobs in construction or restaurants. Or they may be on a brief break between two different jobs when picking up children, and need to change uniforms. There are also evening classes for adults, primarily but not exclusively ESL (English as a Second Language).

Drivers on busy 14th Street, NW, mostly notice the dramatic white louvers of the west and south wings. There is an immediate reading of modernity, of a school and school system that may face challenges but that have bold aspirations for the future. The Upshur Street facades' various eras reflect the fact that the school is



Outdoor terrace off of the library.

physically growing and morphing to meet current needs. Those interpretations are correct, but they're also the tip of an iceberg that few are aware of. The sun louvers, for instance, aren't just for show: Powell was designed to achieve Gold certification in the LEED for Schools program (certification is pending—the review process can be lengthy).

Powell now serves about 550 students, twice the population of only a decade ago. As a public school, it cannot specialize the way charter and private schools often do. Moreover, its mandate includes all children, so it accommodates many ESL students, some disabled students, and others with special needs. In the middle of the design process, DC became one of the earlier cities to mandate gender-neutral bathrooms, which were incorporated into the project.

ISTUDIO's architecture is inseparable from the greatest things about Powell: integrated social programs allow children to learn, freed from basic worries like hunger, while differentiated learning spaces provide a best place for each child's learning style.



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Hoachlander Davis Photography

Reading nook in the library
overlooking the atrium.

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The new Cleveland Park Public Library, as seen from the corner of Connecticut Avenue and Macomb Street, NW. The tall, portal-like window and door surrounds recall the stripped classical architecture of nearby historic commercial and civic buildings.

All photos © Joseph Romeo, courtesy of Perkins Eastman DC

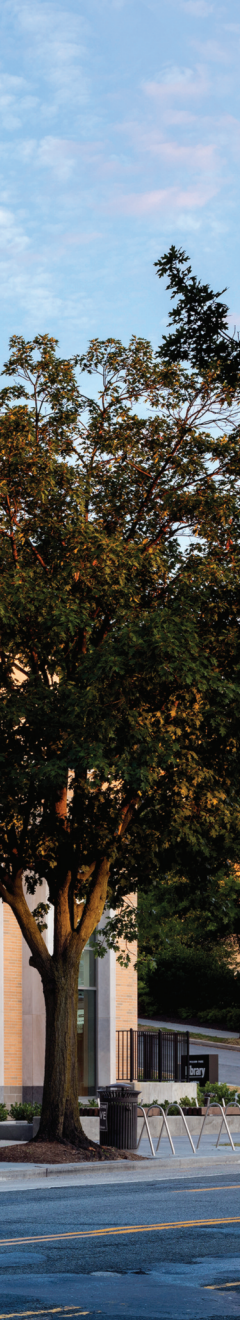
The (Quiet) Life of the Neighborhood

Cleveland Park Gets a Striking New Branch Library

by Ronald O'Rourke

At the new Cleveland Park Public Library on a recent weekend afternoon, the meeting room just inside the main entry was filled by a children's business fair, with a panel of young entrepreneurs discussing their projects while proud parents and other adults listened attentively. Downstairs, in one of the library's lower-level meeting rooms, a group of adults was engaged in a discussion of Buddhism and peace. Both of the rooms were booked throughout the day with meetings and events for various groups. And all the while, the library's reading spaces were being well used by area residents of various ages, many of them immersed in books or periodicals, or focused on their laptop computers.

That's exactly how things are supposed to be at the new facility, which was designed to function not only as a library, but also as a community center for a neighborhood with a strong sense of identity and many active civic organizations, but a dearth of public meeting spaces. The





North-facing façade of the library at the foot of Newark Street.

Project: Cleveland Park Library,
3310 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC

Design/Build Architects: **Perkins Eastman DC**
Associate Architects: **Perkins Eastman**
Landscape Architects: **Landscape Architecture Bureau**
Structural Engineers: **ReStl Designers**
MEP Engineers: **Setty & Associates**
Civil Engineers: **AMT, LLC**
Traffic Engineers: **Gorove/Slade**
Library Consultants: **Library Planning Associates**
Lighting Consultants: **Stroik Lighting Design**
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27,000-square-foot building was designed by **Perkins Eastman DC** (PEDC)—an affiliate of the global architecture firm Perkins Eastman Architects. PEDC's work focuses on the design of community centers, government buildings, educational facilities, housing, and large-scale mixed-use projects. **Matthew J. Bell, FAIA**, was the principal-in-charge for the Cleveland Park project.

The library is located on Connecticut Avenue between Macomb and Newark streets, NW, at the southern gateway to the Cleveland Park commercial corridor. Connecticut Avenue cuts through the neighborhood's street grid at an angle, creating a trapezoidal plot for the library that faces commercial buildings to the east and north, and residential structures, including an apartment building and a number of the neighborhood's single-family homes, to the south and west.

The previous Cleveland Park Library, a rather modest structure built in the early 1950s, measured about 18,000 square feet. Its limestone exterior gave it a certain subdued dignity, and it annually ranked among Washington's top three most heavily trafficked and circulating libraries. But "the building no longer met the needs of the community," PEDC said. "Although it was heavily used and well-loved, it lacked—aside from modern library amenities—a sense of place appropriate for an important public resource." During the firm's community engagement process, "residents of Cleveland Park voiced an interest in increased meeting space for community groups. The heavy usage of the site and the desire for more significant meeting spaces for the community were primary drivers for the [new library's] design."

The District in recent years has received acclaim for the design of its new public libraries, several of which have been covered in these pages (see, for example, the Winter 2010 and Spring 2013 issues). But while many of the city's new libraries are full-on modernist structures, the Cleveland Park Library is designed in a hybrid, historically informed style that reflects the early 20th-century architecture of the adjacent commercial corridor, including the Art Deco Uptown Theater (1936) and the small but stately Cleveland Park Post Office Building (1941). The new library's Connecticut Avenue façade, with its limestone and brick siding, large entry, and tall windows, evokes the stripped classicism of many Roosevelt-era public buildings.

"The façade develops a scale and language appropriate for a civic building located on one of the city's main thoroughfares," the architects said. "The design reinterprets the limestone-framed entry of the original library building while asserting a new civic sense of place at the corner of Macomb and Connecticut, with a larger scale at the building's entry and tall bay windows that support generous interior light and define the street wall."

Many pre-war buildings built in the stripped classical style project a somber dignity or even a brooding majesty. The trick in designing the new library was to capture the dignity and majesty without appearing somber or brooding. The library's large entry was key to achieving this, as it provided an opportunity for employing a lot of glass to lighten up the design.

In the years before World War II, the stripped classical style was popular not only in the United States, but in many other countries as well, including the fascist powers and Stalin's Soviet Union. The style thus has a complex legacy, much discussed over the years by architectural historians and theorists, and often involving after-the-fact associations with both democratic and authoritarian forms of government. The Cleveland Park Library's modest scale, absence of statist imagery, and even its very function as a public library—a symbol of American democracy—clearly align the building with the democratic end of that spectrum.

As the building turns the corner from Connecticut Avenue to address Macomb Street to the south and Newark Street to the north, the rationale for the stripped classical motifs recedes, and the building adopts a more purely modernist vocabulary. But on the building's north side, there is one more historically informed design detail of note: a rounded corner executed in brick that echoes those on nearby historic buildings, particularly the tightly



The façade along Macomb Street is articulated as a series of smaller components, helping the library blend into the residential scale of adjacent blocks.

rounded corner of the commercial building at the southeast corner of Connecticut Avenue and Ordway Street. Viewed from the north, the library's rounded corner suggests a Claes Oldenburg-scaled hinge, highlighting how the building's plan swivels at that point away from the diagonal of Connecticut Avenue and into alignment with the residential grid.

Long outdoor balconies on the building's north and south sides echo the front porches of the houses behind the library. Readers using the balconies activate the outside of the building and advertise the library's activity to passersby. The balconies are accessed from the second-floor main reading room, whose cross-section is about equal in size to a typical house in the neighborhood.

For a building with a lot of masonry on the outside, the interior is surprisingly light-filled. Just beyond the building's entry is a large, lofted front room that PEDC calls the Forum. The space's height reinforces the façade's message of civic grandeur. Wooden frames at the windows help articulate the space, creating intimately scaled reading nooks with views out to the street. The tops of the wooden frames, together with pendant lights and the bottom edge of second-floor study rooms that are cantilevered into the space, create the suggestion of a secondary, lower ceiling in the space.

The first floor's other primary spaces are the large meeting room near the entry, the children's reading room (called the Children's Collection), an additional room accessible from that reading room that can be used for story time or meetings, and the building's main stair hall. A support column in the Children's Collection was fashioned into a tree-shaped book bin and seating area. Children and parents in the room have direct access to a secure outdoor space along Newark Street.

The main stair hall is located where the building turns the corner from Connecticut Avenue to Macomb Street. Large expanses of glass on both sides of the corner flood the space with light. A reading area tucked into the corner on the first level features a wooden desktop that playfully steps down in height as it follows the descent of the stairway. The stair's two lowest steps are turned toward the building's entry area, so that the stair addresses that



A narrow balcony overlooking Macomb Street allows library patrons to enjoy fresh air as they read or work.



Periodicals nook on the second floor.

Adult Collection space, with north-facing clerestory windows admitting soft daylight.





The Forum, conceived as a "living room" for the community.

space and those using it can feel a sense of spiraling upward or downward in moving between the first and second floors.

At the top of the main stair is a small reading area overlooking the lofted forum. Just beyond is the building's large main reading room, called the Adult Collection, which is amply daylighted by huge window walls at either end of the room and additional overhead windows in the room's factory-style saw-tooth ceiling. The overhead windows face north so as to admit a book-friendly, gentle northern light. The window wall on the north end of the room frames an impressive view of the Connecticut Avenue commercial corridor and the Broadmoor apartment building beyond.

Bookcases in the middle of the room offer plenty of shelving space, but are low enough to allow users to perceive the room as a single, grand space. Four glass-enclosed study rooms—the ones that partially cantilever over the lofted forum space—are situated along one side of the Adult Collection; an additional conference room is on the other side. The building's ground floor level includes two additional meeting rooms as well as office and support spaces.

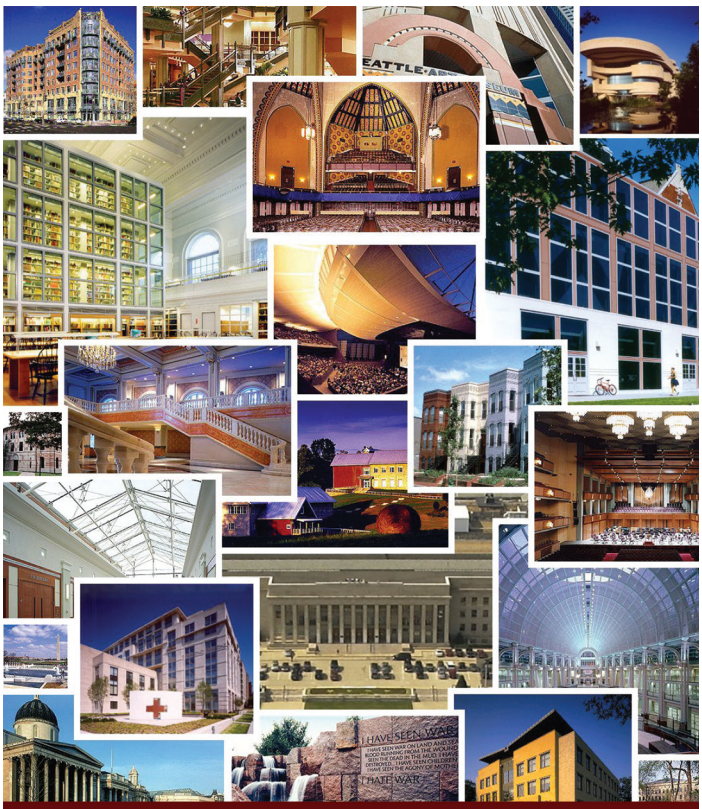
"The library is full of spaces of different size and character to meet the needs of a broad and varied demographic of users," PEDC said. "Spaces for quiet study, noisy play, social interaction, and quiet meditation can all be found in the library. The design includes cubbies, benches, balconies, and room for individuals or large groups." Throughout the design, "interior spaces large and small provide glimpses and framed views of the historic community."

The building's interior color palette is primarily a combination of lighter tones. The main accent comes from walnut-colored wood paneling that warms up the interior and gives the spaces a more residential feel—something that the area's residents requested. (Similar-colored wood panels are used on the building's exterior.) The scheme, Bell said, allows brighter colors to come from the library's furniture and the covers of its books.

The Cleveland Park Library provides "new space for children's and adult collections, substantially larger and more flexible meeting rooms, conference facilities, and study spaces connecting the community inside and out," PEDC said. The design can support meetings totaling up to 400 people in various configurations. And unlike the meeting room in the old library building, the new library's meeting spaces are acoustically insulated, so that meetings won't disturb readers elsewhere in the building.

The neighborhood has responded well to the firm's efforts. "Since the building's opening, foot traffic has increased to 20,000 customers per month, and circulation has increased by a third, to 28,000 per month," the firm said. "During the first three months after the library's opening, the average monthly booking of the meeting spaces increased to 153—a threefold increase from [the rate supported by] the old library's meeting room."

"One of the roles of architecture," Bell said, "is to heighten people's awareness of the specialness" of their local architectural context. The firm's design for the Cleveland Park Library does that, producing "a building that couldn't be anywhere else."



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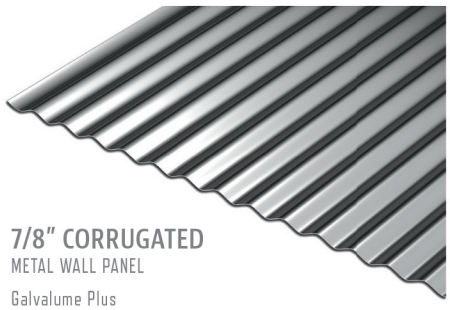
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Cade Museum for Creativity + Invention, Gainesville, FL Installing contractor: Architectural Sheet Metal, Inc.
Architect: GWWO Architects Photographer: hortonphotoinc.com Profile: 7/8" Corrugated Color: Galvalume Plus



7/8" CORRUGATED
METAL WALL PANEL
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Creative Vision

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Views of the main entrance to Audi Field by day and at night.

Goal! Audi Field Breaks the Mold for Soccer Stadiums

by Steven K. Dickens, AIA, LEED AP

The seats of the Roman Colosseum, completed in the year 82 CE, didn't have pads, and of course there were no artificial lights or sound systems, but the archetypal form of the stadium—an oval bowl of seating surrounding a field, with some sun shades and an impressive outward-facing façade—has changed remarkably little in 2,000 years. The form derives from the basic function of accommodating spectators watching a sport or entertainment of some sort, plus the necessary circulation and support spaces.

In the middle of the 20th century in the U.S., most new stadiums hewed closely to the archetype, with almost no variation for differing climates or regional histories—or even for the different types of sports that would be played in the facility. Sites had to be sufficiently large to accommodate the uniform bowl shape—smaller sites simply were not considered viable. The exteriors reflected a range of mid-century modern styles, some impressive and unique, others forgettable and generic, but inside, the experience was minimally different from one city (or, increasingly, suburb) to the next.

Oriole Park at Camden Yards, in Baltimore, famously started a movement toward stadiums more tailored to their sites and grounded in the idea that a distinctive venue optimizes the spectator experience—and that spectators' experiences *outside* of the stadium itself should also be memorable. Camden Yards' urban location allowed for multiple transportation options: in addition to traveling by car, spectators could walk or take transit to the game, and on the way (in or out), partake in restaurants, bars, shopping, or even art events. Camden Yards' incorporation of the historic B&O Warehouse as the backdrop for right field (and as a venue for multiple amenity spaces as well as Orioles management offices) was groundbreaking: even on television, the location was unmistakable. The design also opened a slot view to the towers of downtown Baltimore, further cementing a sense of place.

Camden Yards was designed by the architecture firm HOK Sport and opened in 1992. Fast-forward 25 years and the same firm, now rebranded as **Populous**, received the commission for a



All photos © Adam Brockett





new Major League Soccer stadium on a site near Buzzard Point, in Southwest Washington. If Camden Yards hammered the first big crack in the ancient Roman and Modernist stadium archetype, Audi Field, as the soccer stadium was ultimately dubbed, smashed it to pieces—and then reassembled the parts.

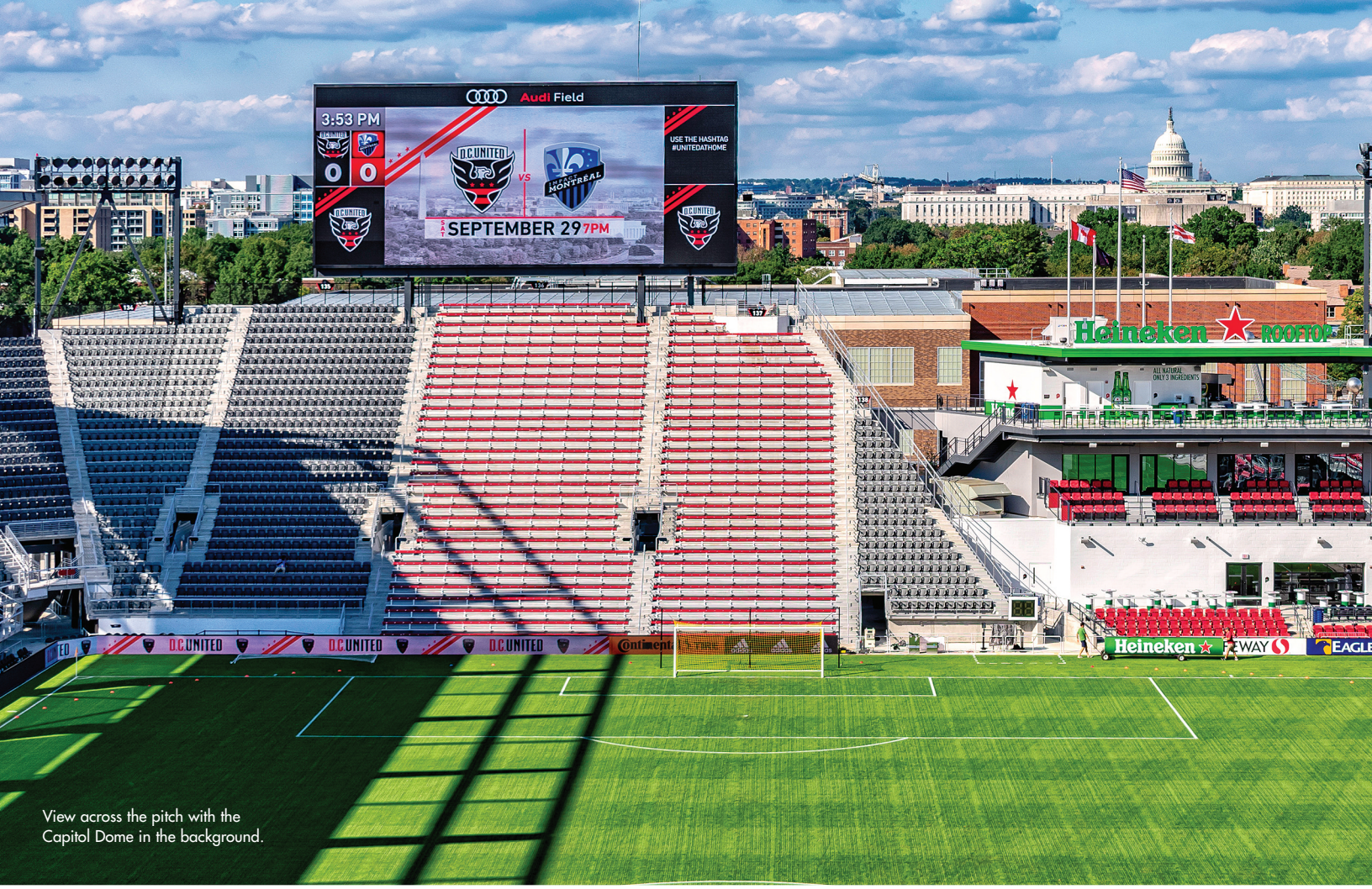
Populous principal **Jon Knight, AIA**, said Audi Field is "absolutely unique" as a result of having a site requiring a broad range of governmental approvals and physical challenges far more daunting than any that he had worked on previously. The continuous bowl has been fractured, exploded, and rearranged to fit a tight rectangular site and to work around such obstacles. Aesthetic choices reinforce this: particularly from the outside, the parts display a self-consciously wide array of forms, materials, colors, finishes, and patterns, with no two sections alike.

Audi Field, home of the DC United team, sits on one of the smallest sites for Major League Soccer stadiums. It is a superblock created by the merger of two full city blocks plus parts of two more, which required eliminating portions of First and S streets, SW, and Potomac Avenue. The stadium complex and its site are essentially the same size, so planning obstacles could not be resolved simply by moving the stadium, say, a little to the east or north.

This came to the forefront when the first big challenge arose. A huge bank of Pepco electrical lines ran under First Street, SW.

Project: Audi Field,
100 Potomac Avenue, SW, Washington, DC

Architects: **Populous**
Associate Architects: **Michael Marshall Design**
Landscape Architects: **Populous**
Structural Engineers: **A+F Engineers**
Mechanical/Electrical Engineers: **ME Engineers**
Plumbing/Fire Protection Engineers: **Howe Engineers**
Civil Engineers: **WSP**
Design-Build Contractor: **Turner Construction Company**



View across the pitch with the Capitol Dome in the background.



The pitch at Audi Field. The easement for underground Pepco power lines is evident in the gap between the first and second tiers of seating at right.





Relocating the lines was prohibitively expensive, but Pepco required access along the entire length for maintenance. Ultimately an easement was worked out: the lines remain below-grade, cutting through the site, with a 24-foot-tall air space above for 24-hour, 365-day-a-year access.

"The easement was a really complicated aspect of the site that drove the design of the building," said project architect Knight. If the pitch (as the playing field for soccer is known) were centered on the site, the Pepco lines would run under the field, which would be subject to being torn up—potentially literally in the middle of a game—should a power emergency arise. Accordingly, the pitch, instead of running in the typical location at the center of the stadium, was shifted to be closer to the west side of the site (Second Street, SW). This creates an asymmetrical arrangement in which the east stands are much taller and deeper than the west stands, breaking the form of a uniform bowl and lending variety to seating types and spectator experiences.

At most modern stadiums such as Nationals Park and Camden Yards, the playing field is well below the level of the entrance. Thanks to the Pepco lines, this was not possible at Audi Field. Almost uniquely in the world of pro sport facilities, its pitch is at grade level. A pedestrian outside of Audi Field can glimpse the green grass of the pitch from several places, as well as slivers of the spectator stands. This means that spectators and players can see outward, as well. This arrangement is reminiscent of many high school or minor league stadiums, in that it connects the sport to the surrounding city in a direct and highly engaging way.

The Pepco easement also forced a very particular shape and form to the east stands. Only four rows of seats fit between the Pepco swath and the pitch. The next section of seats jumps up to clear the Pepco air rights, creating some of the best seats in a soccer stadium anywhere—seats that are horizontally quite close to the field but raised up enough to allow viewers to follow the ball more easily. These are, accordingly, designated as "club seats." Above the club seats are a ring of suites and the press box. Above that, the extra width of the east side allowed a large area of relatively inexpensive general admission seats. One might dismiss them as the "nosebleed" seats, except that, thanks to the way that the site molded the building, they are closer to the pitch and have better sightlines than many stadiums' higher-end seating areas.

If one knows that the easement is there, it is clearly visible—an unobstructed shaft of space running under the full length of the east stands. Most of the time, it serves as a service vehicle lane, accommodating the necessities of deliveries and pickups. On game days it becomes part of the spectator circulation. Portable food and souvenir carts lend it the feeling of a fairly normal spectator concourse, but they can all be moved at a moment's notice should there be a Pepco emergency.

If the physical and operational ramifications of the Pepco lines were challenging, they were at least specific. A more ambiguous challenge that faced the design team was the array of sometimes conflicting desires of city officials, acting primarily through the DC Office of Planning (DCOP), and adjacent property owners. Essentially, the design team was tasked to respond simultaneously to past and future contexts, without ignoring the present: the fast-disappearing industrial past of Buzzard Point; the present context, including the National Defense University at Fort McNair to the west and low-scale residential neighborhoods to the north; and planned future developments at the east and south sides, expected to be



View of the pitch. At the beginning of a game, the players emerge from the grade-level opening just below the large DC United logo.



Interior of the Club Shop.



Exterior of the Club Shop.

high-density mixed-use projects. "DCOP wanted to ensure that the stadium's presence would be beneficial to future developments," noted **Michael Marshall, AIA**, whose firm, Marshall Moya Design (now known as **Michael Marshall Design**), was a local partner in the project. "And they also homed in on an industrial aesthetic as appropriate to the history of Buzzard Point."

It's a neat trick, but the design team succeeded. The exposed structure and form-follows-function character of Audi Field connects authentically to the industrial past, while the stylish materials speak to the future. Breaking the facility into parts allowed the scale and function of each piece to best suit its location—both internally and with respect to present or future across-the-street neighbors. The north and west sides are lower, relating better to existing areas that are not expected to see much change, while the east and south sides have retail storefronts ready to bolster the mixed-use streetscapes of the future.

Although Buzzard Point is Metro-accessible, neither of the two nearest stations (Waterfront and Navy Yard) is especially close. The major entrances to Audi Field, accordingly, were placed to minimize walking time. A new street (officially a rerouting of First Street, but dubbed "Audi Drive") was added at the east side of the stadium to make the shortest possible pedestrian connection to a two-million-square-foot development slated for a large site immediately south of Audi Field. A bicycle valet station was provided to encourage that form of transportation and positioned at the southwest corner of Audi Field, to vitalize that portion of the site.

DCOP also kept sustainability on the table. The design and construction teams achieved LEED Gold certification, relying on important-but-invisible points like "enhanced refrigerant management," water-efficient landscaping, ultra-low water usage, high-efficiency HVAC, and the like. Recently, however, the DC United team (which owns the stadium; the city owns the land)



arranged for installation of a bank of photovoltaic panels on the roof of the management offices at the south side of the facility. This won't count toward the LEED rating, since it was added after the LEED process was under way, but it shows that Major League Soccer is striving to be a responsible corporate citizen. This will be important as Buzzard Point redevelops. Already, partly as a result of Audi Field, there are three major projects under construction that will collectively bring over 1,000 new apartments to the area, plus a considerable amount of street-level (and in many cases, water-facing) retail and restaurants. More are in the works, including a 177-unit, all-affordable apartment project and potentially a hotel.

Populous states on its website that Audi Field "is a case study on how our design process doesn't stop where our project's boundaries end." Washington can already boast of two major sports facilities—Capital One Arena and Nationals Park—which catalyzed immense private investment and substantially revitalized the Gallery Place and Capitol Riverfront areas, respectively. Audi Field is following in these footsteps for Buzzard Point, as is the most recently-opened D.C. pro sports facility, the Entertainment and Sports Arena at the St. Elizabeth's East Campus. Teams and city officials, it seems, have learned that their separate agendas can both be achieved through cooperation. But process only takes a project so far. Success is dependent upon the architects and urban planners resolving the seemingly unresolvable, making lemonade from the lemons presented by the site, program, and other sometimes unpredictable constraints. This clearly happened, repeatedly, in the process that created Audi Field.

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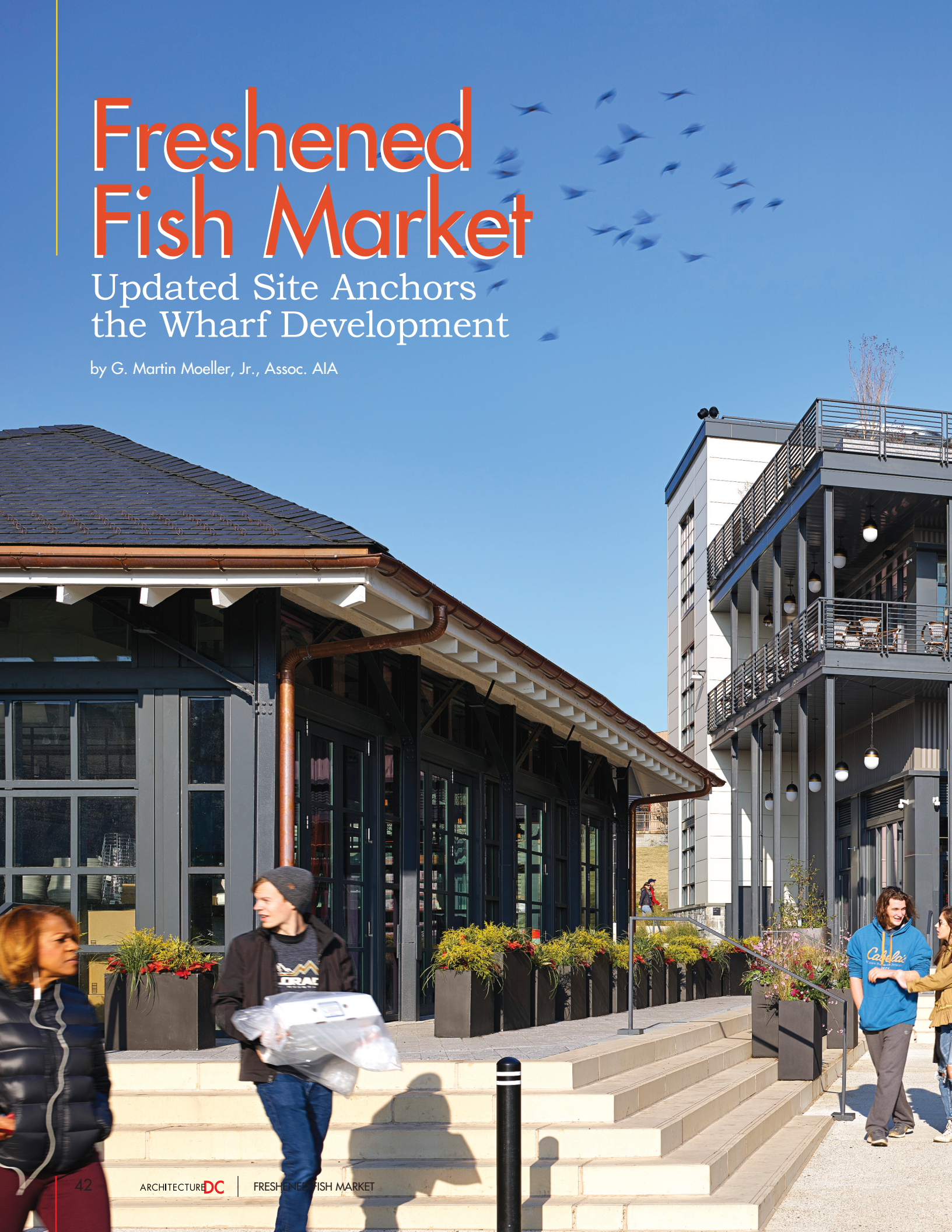
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Freshened Fish Market

Updated Site Anchors the Wharf Development

by G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Assoc. AIA





The reconstructed Oyster Shucking Shed, now a restaurant, at left, with one of the new buildings at the Maine Avenue Fish Market in the background.

Photo © Thomas Holdsworth

Project: Maine Avenue Fish Market,
1100 Maine Avenue, SW, Washington, DC

Architects: **StudioMB**
Interior Designers: **StudioMB** (Tiki TNT, Rappahannock Oyster Bar, Southwest Soda Pop Shop); **BCJ** (Blue Bottle Coffee); **HD Interiors** (District Doughnut); **Grupo 7** (Officina)
Landscape Architects: **Landscape Architecture Bureau**
Structural Engineers: **Ehlert Bryan Consulting Structural Engineers**
MEP Engineers: **MCE Engineers**
Civil Engineers: **AMT, LLC**
Marine Engineers: **Moffatt & Nichol**
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Historic Preservation Consultants: **EHT Traceries**
Contractor: **Balfour Beatty**

When the Maine Avenue Fish Market along DC's Southwest Waterfront first opened in 1805, the U.S. Capitol was still decades away from initial completion, the Executive Mansion (later officially renamed the White House) did not yet bear its distinctive north and south porticoes, and the land that would become the greensward of the National Mall was a scruffy landscape punctuated by a meandering creek that drained into mud flats along the ever-fluctuating bank of the Potomac River. Like all of those other Washington landmarks, the fish market has undergone dramatic physical changes over the ensuing centuries, but it has endured. Although it remains a private commercial enterprise, the open-air market is a veritable local institution.

The Maine Avenue Fish Market—the oldest continuously operating facility of its kind in the country—was a cornerstone of a bustling wharf district during the early 19th century. Small boats piloted by Chesapeake Bay fishermen, crabbers, and oystermen mingled with larger ships carrying goods to and from other ports in the U.S. and abroad. With the onset of the Civil War, the area became a major embarkation point for Union soldiers headed into battle. Commercial shipping activity was hindered in the late 19th century as the river silted up and railroads became the preferred means of transporting goods within the country. The adjacent neighborhood, which had attracted many freed slaves after the war, was riddled with substandard housing lining unpaved streets.

In the early 20th century, the U.S. Congress, which still exercised direct control over the District of Columbia, commissioned plans for improvements to the wharf and the surrounding area. One result of this initiative was a new Municipal Fish Market, completed in 1916, which included a long, Colonial Revival building with a street-facing colonnade, and a freestanding Lunch Room, where wharf workers and fishermen could eat. An open-air Oyster Shucking Shed was appended to the Lunch Room.

In the 1960s, the main Market Building was demolished to make way for an off-ramp from the new I-395 bridge across the Potomac. The Lunch Room, which by then was operating as a public restaurant, remained standing, as did the Oyster Shed, which had been enclosed years before. The vendors who had occupied stalls in the building were relocated to temporary barges provided by the city. The colorful awnings and eye-catching signs that the vendors installed on the barges created a carnival-like atmosphere that many locals came to love, while the rest of the wharf area was gradually lined with generic motels and restaurants.

The narrow building at the southeastern end of the site, closest to the main Wharf development, allows views and pedestrian access from Maine Avenue to the river.





Aerial view of the site in 1931, showing the long Municipal Fish Market building at lower left.

Photo from the National Archives and Records Administration



The site as it appeared before construction of the District Wharf development. The former Lunch Room and Oyster Shed are seen at left center, with a later, L-shaped addition.

Photo courtesy of StudioMB



Photo © Thomas Holdsworth



The former Oyster Shed in the foreground, with the former Lunch Room in the right background, before renovation.

Photo courtesy of StudioMB



View through the sliver building to the main plaza in the revitalized fish market.

Photo © Thomas Holdsworth

The Southwest Waterfront remained an underutilized and under-appreciated civic asset until the fall of 2017, when the first phase of the ambitious District Wharf redevelopment opened. Co-developers PN Hoffman and Madison Marquette replaced a row of banal, low-rise motels and other unexceptional structures with mid-rise buildings containing a mix of apartments, offices, restaurants, bars, and a large music hall called the Anthem. A new waterfront promenade, lined with outdoor cafes and punctuated by piers containing various public amenities, linked the complex. It was an immediate success.

In conjunction with these larger-scale projects, the developers commissioned **StudioMB**, which had designed the renovation of the Wharf's Pier 4 [featured in the Fall 2018 issue of *ARCHITECTUREDC*], to oversee a transformation of the historic fish market. The program included five new structures, as well as the restoration of the Lunch Room and Oyster Shed. The goal was to provide facilities for a cluster of new restaurants that would complement, rather than compete with, the existing fish vendors. The cluster would also serve as the northwestern anchor of the entire District Wharf development, which is soon to include a second phase at the southeastern end of the waterfront.

"In [developer Monty] Hoffman's mind, this was always to be a separate and distinct precinct," explained **David C. Bagnoli, AIA, LEED AP, BD+C**, a principal at StudioMB. "The fish market has a funky character. While making the historic building the jewel of the development, we wanted to maintain that honky-tonk quality, but interpret it in a more sophisticated way."

"We also wanted to take the opportunity to make a connection from Maine Avenue," added principal **Adam McGraw, AIA**. "The rest of the Wharf has a uniform street presence. We saw an opportunity to attract people as they come under the [highway] bridge, in terms of how we present the project graphically and through building massing."

The site plan includes six major structures—the restored Lunch Room/Oyster Shed plus five new buildings—on a wedge-shaped site immediately adjacent to the piers lined with vendors' barges. The historic structure, which now, appropriately enough, houses an oyster bar, stands roughly at the center of the site. It is joined by three of the new buildings—accommodating a distillery and several other restaurants—to define an irregularly shaped plaza. A fourth new building, containing a coffee house and a doughnut shop, stands at the southeastern edge of the site, closest to the main

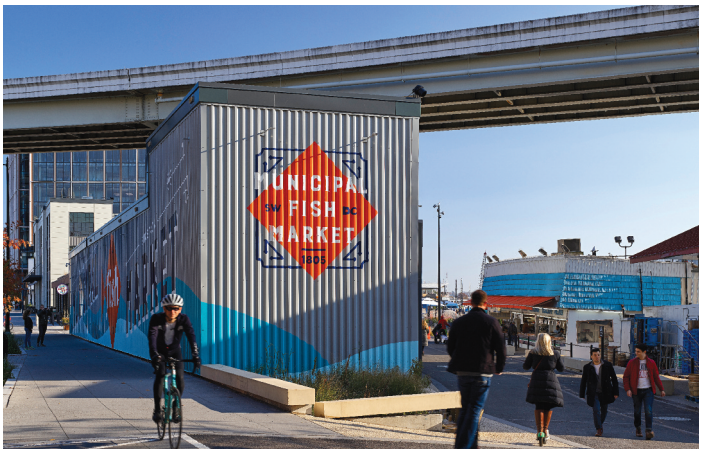


The revitalized fish market site, with the reconstructed Lunch Room and Oyster Shed in the center foreground, the vendor's barges at right, and the main Wharf development in the background.

Photo © Regis Lefebure



The fish market site, with the distillery at left center. Photo © Thomas Holdsworth



The operations building, with the off-ramp from the I-395 bridge above. Photo © Thomas Holdsworth

Wharf development. Its slender plan allows clear views—and pedestrian circulation—from Maine Avenue to the water. The fifth new structure, located at the northwestern corner of the site and surrounding one of the support piers of the highway ramp, provides space for mechanical equipment and other operations functions.

The restoration of the Lunch Room/Oyster Shed was, of course, critical to the success of the project. "The building was in terrible shape," said project architect **Jenna Bolino, AIA**. "It was full of trash, and there was a cheap L-shaped addition. Until we [demolished] the newer parts, we did not know what we'd find." Ultimately, they found that two of the Lunch Room's original masonry walls were still standing, with much of the brickwork intact. The most exciting discovery was an operable, mahogany door that was in "shockingly good condition," having been bricked in on one side and tiled over on the other.

The Oyster Shed was originally built as an open-air structure supported by wide-flange steel columns. Structural analysis revealed that the columns were undersized, however, and many had rusted. The architects devised a strategy for adding new steel columns as needed and splicing them to the rusted ones. During restoration, rafters were numbered, removed, and later reinstalled—new rafters were judiciously added to ensure adequate support for the roof. Although the pavilion is now an enclosed restaurant space, the glassy perimeter walls—with large, operable windows—recall its original open-air form.

Site investigations also revealed that both the masonry Lunch Room walls and the steel structure of the Oyster Shed had sunk toward the water's edge. The design team decided to insert "micropiles"—three inches in diameter each—around the structures in order to shore them up. That proved challenging when it was discovered that the entire site rested on a relieving platform—



View outward from the Officina restaurant, located in one of the new buildings at the Fish Market. **Photo © Rey Lopez**

essentially an underground wood deck covered with about eight feet of dirt. "If you hit anything hollow" while driving the piles, Bolino noted, "the grout would fall out and you'd have to start over."

StudioMB conceived of the complex's new buildings as "cousins" bearing a familial resemblance while maintaining their individual character. Drawing aesthetic inspiration from the simple, industrial steel structure of the Oyster Shed, the architects used charcoal-gray-painted metal columns, canopies, and window muntins in varied compositions to unify the complex. Steel-and-aluminum balconies and exterior stairs on several of the structures provide welcome protection from the elements, while evoking the historic architecture of New Orleans—an apt allusion, given the strong association between that city and its own riverfront.

Because the fish market complex is at the end of the District Wharf closest to the center of the city, the architects felt that it was important to create a sense of gateway. "We wanted to develop markers that would define the precinct," said Bagnoli. "We settled on a smokestack, murals, and a big marquee sign."

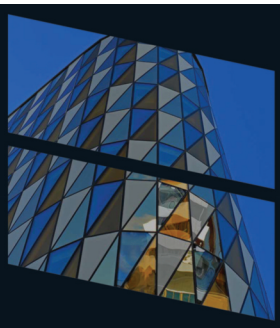
The idea of incorporating a smokestack in a modern project in DC, a city that never boasted much in the way of industry, might seem like a stretch, but in fact there once was a prominent smokestack at (or very near) the current location. The new version, which was built in sections and stacked on site, is adjacent to the distillery building and emblazoned with the slogan "Make rum not war" on one side, and the brand name "Thrashers Rum" on the other. Several of the individual businesses in the complex have added murals, and the operations building surrounding the highway pier includes a large painted sign announcing the fish market.

StudioMB's stated goal of re-creating the honky-tonk spirit of the fish market while making it more sophisticated could have been a recipe for hollow, sanitized kitsch. Yet the results are remarkably convincing. The latest rendition of the fish market looks modern and well composed, but it retains just enough of the lively, haphazard, even messy character that defined the site for centuries. It is a difficult balance to achieve.

That achievement is even more impressive given the broader technical challenges that the architects faced during the design and construction phases. Delicate agreements between the developers and the longtime fish market vendors required that utility access, parking, and the visibility of vendor barges to customers be maintained at all times. This ultimately entailed a complex sequencing plan in which, for example, electrical services were moved temporarily to the operations structure that surrounds the highway pier, then permanently relocated to the distillery building once it was finished.

Even more problematic was the fact that the project site is in a flood plain. Historic preservation authorities decreed early on that the historic structures could not be moved to a higher elevation, so the design and construction team had to resort to a multi-faceted system of flood protection strategies. The historic building, for instance, can be protected when necessary by an AquaFence pop-up barrier system, which is tested once a year. Most of the newer structures are secured by a combination of flood walls and Presray "FastLogs"—aluminum panels that can be slid into slots to seal doorways and windows. All concrete slabs had to be waterproofed, and all penetrations for rebar, etc., had to be specially sealed to keep out water.

Most visitors to the new fish market are unlikely to notice its ecologically precarious setting, however, as they enjoy the abundant restaurants, bars, and outdoor seating that have already made this a locals' hotspot.



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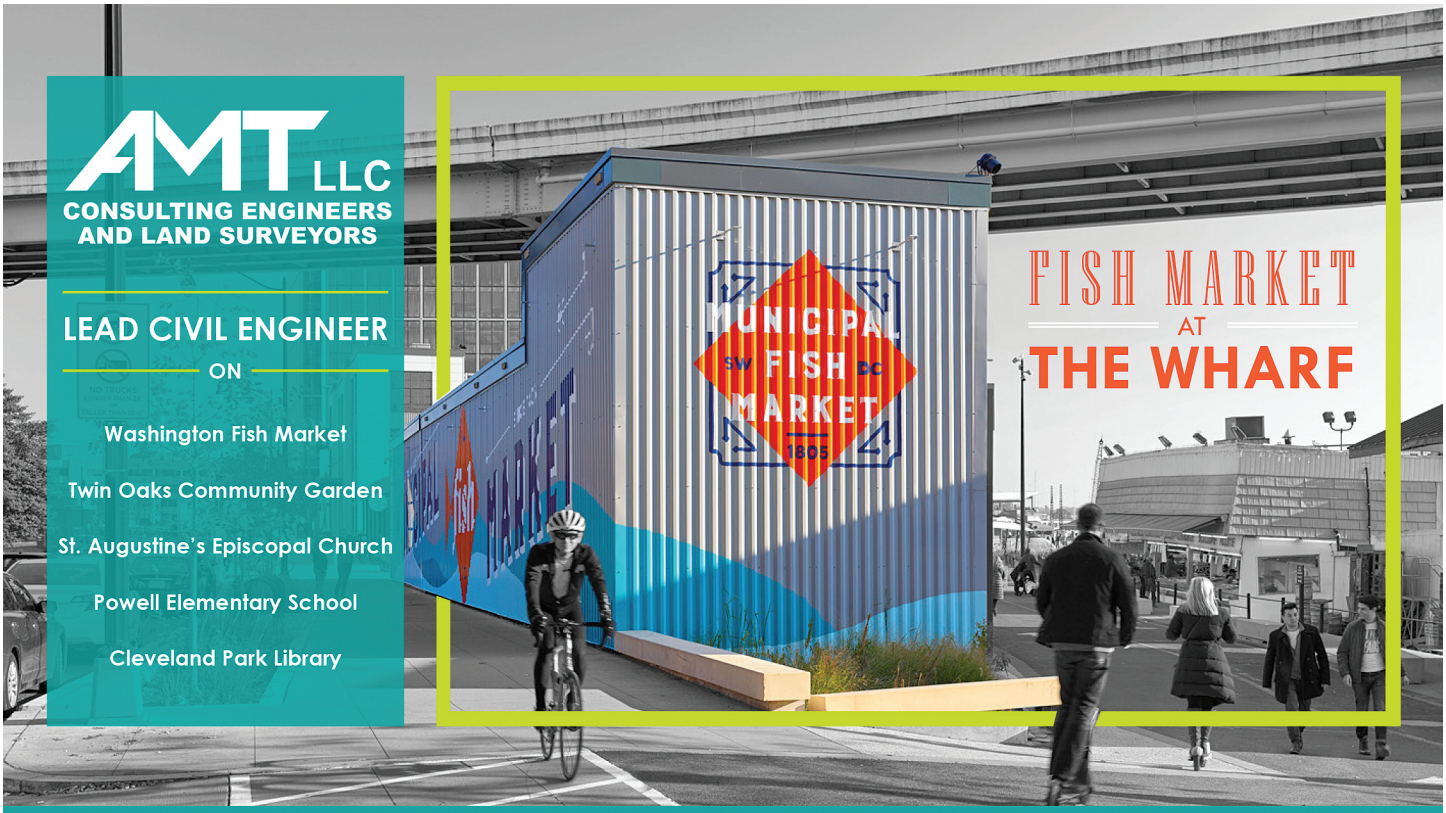
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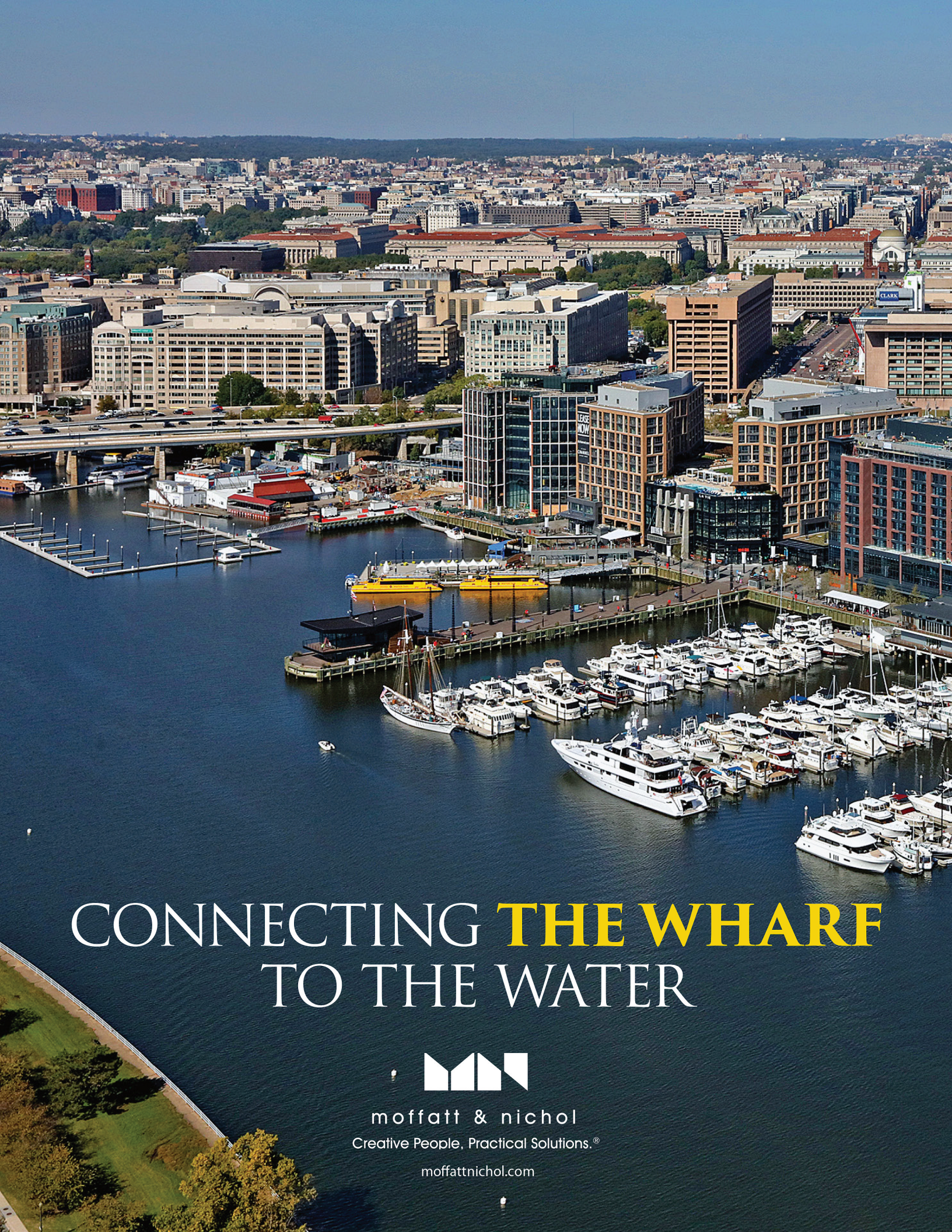


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St. Augustine's Episcopal Church, with the sanctuary visible behind the tilted glass wall on the upper level.

All photos © Anice Hoachlander/ Hoachlander Davis Photography

A Church Leans In to the City

MTFA's Design for St. Augustine's Episcopal Engages Its Community

by Ronald O'Rourke

The Palm Sunday service at the new St. Augustine's Episcopal Church in Washington began outside, in the building's front entry plaza, where the congregants could be seen by the surrounding community as they assembled beneath the church's dynamically angular, glass-clad upper level. After welcoming remarks and a reading from the Book of Luke, the Reverend Martha Clark and her congregation, palm branches in hand, entered the building and gathered around the church's baptismal font, situated in a circular space just inside the front door, for the reading in unison of a psalm.

The worshipers then joined in a processional hymn as they walked up the building's grand staircase, elevating themselves both physically and spiritually, to arrive at the main second-floor space—the church's striking, light-filled sanctuary, where the remainder of the service took place. As they listened to the readings and participated in the service, the sanctuary's tilted glass curtain wall, which acts as the backdrop to the altar, afforded them an expansive view of the surrounding community and the sky above.

The service's sequential settings highlighted key design features of the new St. Augustine's, a project located on Maine Avenue between Water Street and 6th Street in Washington's rapidly changing Southwest waterfront area. The building's compact, energetic design makes good use of its limited footprint to provide the church with a strong but welcoming presence on its site, with the structure's tilted glass wall literally leaning into the surrounding



The curving brick wall along Maine Avenue, at left, recalls the curves of the Arena Stage building across the street, while the soaring, angled glass wall of the sanctuary provides a vertical complement to the strong horizontality of the other building.

Project: St. Augustine's Episcopal Church,
555 Water Street, SW, Washington, DC

Architects: **MTFA Architecture**
Structural Engineers: **Ehlert Bryan Consulting Structural Engineers**
MEP Engineers: **Metropolitan Engineering, Inc./Shapiro-O'Brien; Potomac Energy Group**
Civil Engineers: **AMT, LLC**
Commercial Food Service Designers: **Drafting & Design, LLC**
Owner's Representative: **KCM, Inc.**
Contractor: **Scott-Long Construction, Inc.**

neighborhood at a six-degree angle, symbolizing St. Augustine's longstanding commitment to engaging and supporting the local community.

The 16,396-square-foot building was designed by **MTFA Architecture**, an Arlington-based architecture, interiors, and planning firm that counts a number of religious structures among its civic and institutional portfolio. MTFA's team for the project included principals **Michael T. Foster, FAIA**; **James Clark, FAIA, LEED AP BD+C**; and **Meagan Jancy, AIA, LEED AP BD+C**; senior associate **Braden Field AIA, LEED AP**; and project architect **Christopher Winnike, AIA, LEED AP BD+C**.

St. Augustine's previous building, which was located on the same block, was a suburban-looking, single-story structure designed in the mid-century modern style by Baltimore architect Alexander Smith Cochran. Constructed in 1965, the building "was in disrepair and on the verge of being overwhelmed by surrounding development," MTFA said. "The congregation envisioned a new church building that would showcase and connect their active congregation to the community. After many years of being hidden in the middle of an overgrown lot, [they wanted] to both be seen and see the city while praying for its leaders."

Employing a strategy currently being used by multiple Washington-area churches, St. Augustine's sold part of its site for commercial development and used the proceeds to help finance the new structure. The part that was sold faces the water and was used for a new 107-unit condominium development designed by Bethesda-based SK&I Architecture. The smaller slice that the church retained for its own use runs along Maine Avenue and faces inland, toward the community served by the church. The retained parcel's limited area meant that the new church building had to be a two-story structure.

Drawing from Christian traditions and the site's location, MTFA's design was inspired by the idea of a wind-powered ship. "The concept of a ship with sails moving forward relates to the waterfront site and religious symbolism," the firm said. The building "appears to be pulled forward by the nave, reinforcing the early Christian symbol of the Church as a ship." That nautical image might not be immediately obvious to onlookers, because the design doesn't descend into vernacular cliché. "We didn't want to be literal [in our design]. But the building's sculptural elements have meaning for the congregation to invite and welcome the diversity of their community."

The design's strong lines help the building hold its own in the presence of one of the city's most spectacular new modernist structures—the late Bing Thom's sinuous, glass-wrapped Arena Stage building (see the Spring 2011 issue of *ARCHITECTUREDC*), which is directly across the street. "We were very aware of the strong horizontal orientation of the roof overhang and the curved glass at Arena Stage, and wanted to contrast it," the firm said. Consequently, in designing St. Augustine's, "we tried to emphasize the verticality in the glass wall and express it as a plane that extends and stretches upward without an apparent edge."

Recessed under the glass wall is the main entrance, where "the church's welcoming nature to the neighborhood is expressed with cast-stone profiles representing open doors," the firm said. Passing through those doors, visitors immediately encounter the circular space with the baptismal font at its center. The font, which is estimated to date to the 11th century, was transferred from the church's previous building. Just beyond the font space, in the middle of the first floor, is the building's lofted entry and circulation area, with its grand staircase leading up to the second level. First-floor perimeter spaces include a chapel near the front entrance, three classrooms, a meeting hall with its own street entry and secondary entry plaza, the church's office, its kitchen, and an elevator for those not able to use the staircase.

At the top of the grand staircase is the second-floor gathering and circulation space, which serves as the narthex (the antechamber



One corner of the brick tower at the western edge of the site angles inward to make way for a simple cross.

to the sanctuary). Second-floor perimeter spaces include the sacristy on one side of the sanctuary, an overflow room on the other side, two more classrooms, and the church's library, which is named for the late Supreme Court justice Thurgood Marshall, a longtime member of the congregation. The finishes in most of the building's interior spaces are neat and economical, a strategy that helped husband resources for the building's most important space, the sanctuary.

And what a space the sanctuary is. In many churches, as congregants listen to sermons about the values they should take out into the world, they are cut off visually from that world. In the sanctuary at St. Augustine's, in contrast, the surrounding city is continuously on view. "Churches in urban settings," MTFA said, "are becoming less closed off, and sanctuaries that were once secluded and are now open and connected."

Wooden slats that define the sanctuary's sloped ceiling plane are held in place by a concealed suspension system. Made from Nordic beech, they help control the room's acoustics. The sanctuary's flooring is made from the same wood. The altar area is a simple platform that rises just one step above the floor plane—enough to define the zone while maintaining a close connection between celebrants and congregants. "The detailing and materials," the firm said, "draw inspiration from the traditional craftsmanship and religious symbolism of shipbuilding while also tying the building to its waterfront location."

Coffered segments on the sanctuary's side walls add further acoustic control and also "create a datum"—a visual reference line—"that lowers the sense of scale and creates a feeling of intimacy within the volume of the space," the firm said. A secondary glass wall on one side of the sanctuary



The church's light-filled sanctuary.

permits a view into the adjoining overflow room, and through a window on the far side of that room to the water.

Opposite the main window wall, a row of small clerestory windows, each set in a coffered frame, brings to mind a ship's portholes or the clerestory windows of a Baroque church. The small windows "help illuminate the interior of the sanctuary throughout the day, reducing the dark contrast between inside and outside, so that the glass wall reads as transparently as possible," the firm said. "The intent was to ring the ceiling with light to [emphasize] the lightness of the ceiling plane. The windows were set deep and with angled baffles so as to not allow direct light or glare into the sanctuary, with the exception of a single stream at the lowest sun angle of the year—at Christmas!"

Designing the glass curtain wall's interior bracing "was challenging because we wanted to minimize the structure in an economical way," the firm said. "Standard bar joists were used vertically to pick up the wind load of the glass wall, and braced with tension cables. The detailing was important to reinforce the design goals of verticality and emphasizing the geometry. The mullion finish selection of a champagne bronze color provides warmth inside the sanctuary."

The window wall's exterior surface is an exquisitely detailed plane of glass—the equal or better of glass curtain walls on many new office buildings in the city. At night, with the sanctuary's interior lights on, the building glows and the glass permits views from the street into the church, advertising its life and activity to the surrounding community.

"We worked closely with the glass manufacturer" in selecting the glass for the window wall, the firm said. "The reflectivity of the glazing is tuned so that the experience of the wall changes throughout the day, [shifting from being] very reflective in direct sun in the middle of the day to almost completely clear when the

interior is lit at night. It really puts the sanctuary up on display and celebrates it as a sacred space, almost like the church is inside a display case." As a result, "the glass wall allows a visual and spiritual connection from inside and out."

The window wall and the building's other large windows "were our top priority as we envisioned our new building," Clark said. "We wanted light and visibility and connection. We wanted to see the world around us, and for the world to see us at worship and in our life together as a community of faith. The expanse of glass is literally our window onto the world and the spiritual lens which connects us with God's created world as well as with the life and needs of the neighborhood and city around us."

The building "has improved our ability to conduct services and ministry programs in ways that we never were able to in our previous building," Clark said. The new design "is completely accessible, with a ground-level entrance, an elevator to the second floor, and accessible restroom facilities on both levels. We have doubled our classroom and community meeting space and added a commercial kitchen. Together, this has deepened and enhanced our ministry of hospitality. We are able to offer a welcoming and inclusive space for individuals and community groups of all ages and abilities, and serve as both a spiritual home and community gathering place for a broad range of activities and programs." The acoustics in the sanctuary, she added, "have caught the attention of several artists, and we have been able to grow our year-round offerings of music, dance, and theater, as well as provide rehearsal, gallery, and performance space."

St. Augustine's members "are coming to understand our place as a neighborhood church with a 50-plus-year history and a new building at the crossroads of a rapidly changing and developing area of the city," she said. "With the legacy of having Thurgood [Marshall] and [his wife] Cecilia Marshall as part of our founding parentage, we have continued to stand as advocates for economic and racial justice for our most vulnerable Southwest DC neighbors, especially as they find themselves in tension with the transformation of large portions of their community."

Noting that the church went through its own period of dislocation between the demolition of its old building and the construction of the new one, the congregation is now "walking into a new life together in a new building, with renewed mission and changing ministries," Clark said. "We are committed to the work of ensuring that all residents—old-timers and newcomers—benefit from this neighborhood transformation and remain included and welcome in the growing waterfront family."



The entry area is centered on a historic font, believed to date to the 11th century.



The small chapel just off the main entry area has a large window facing the street.

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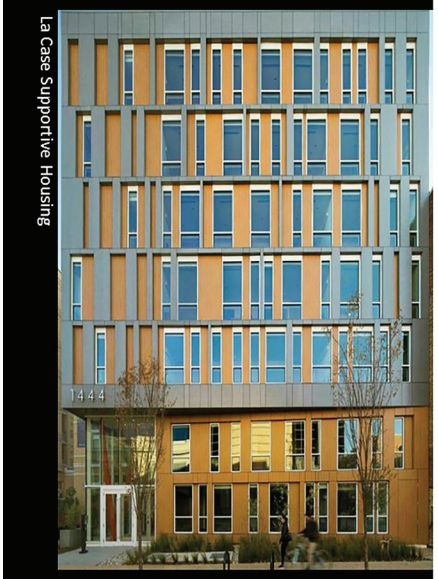
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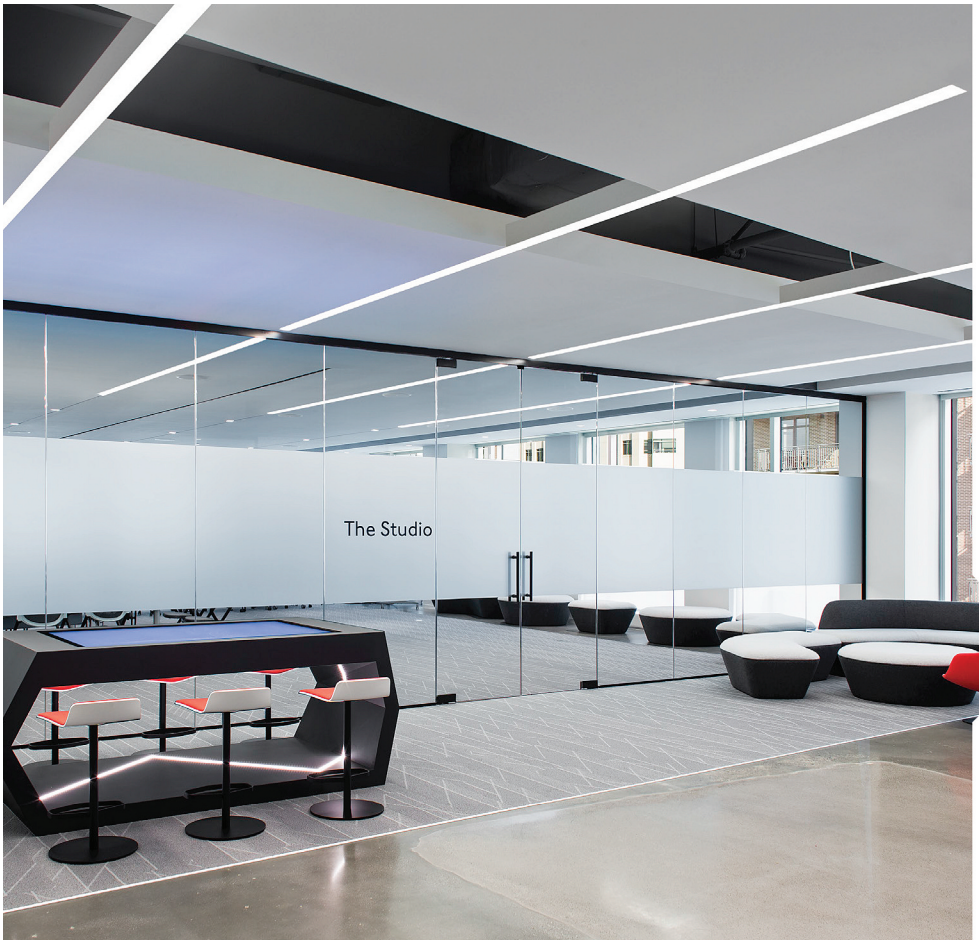
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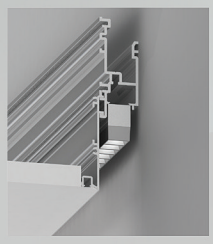
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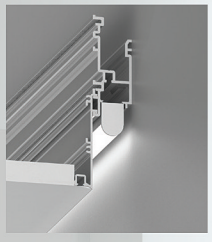
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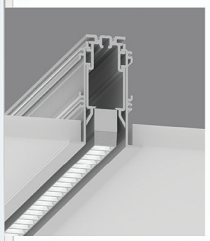
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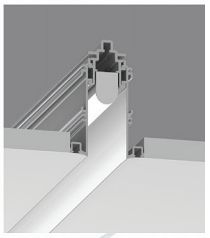
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Main entrance to the Commons at Stanton Square, with the Community of Hope wing at left and the Martha's Table wing at right.

All photos © Chris Ambridge, AIA

Project: The Commons at Stanton Square,
2375 Elvans Road, SE, Washington, DC

Architects/Interior Designers: **cox graae + spack architects**
Concept Design Architects: **Perkins Eastman**
Landscape Architects: **Landscape Architecture Bureau**
Structural Engineers: **Linton Engineering**
MEP Engineers: **James Posey Associates**
Civil Engineers: **Wiles Mensch Corporation**
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A Seat at the Table

Venerable Non-Profits Find New Home

by Peter James, AIA, LEED AP BD+C

The Commons at Stanton Square occupies a hilltop site in Anacostia, with sweeping views of the surrounding neighborhood and Washington's monumental core beyond. The first component in a phased development plan that also includes mixed-income housing, the Commons assembles an array of functions under one roof: community-serving daycare, after-school and young-adult training programs, a commercial kitchen, counseling and social services, and administrative offices for two nonprofit organizations.

The real estate developer Horning Brothers (HB) purchased the wooded, previously undeveloped eight-acre site in 2005. The steep site—which slopes more than 80 feet from one edge to another—offered spectacular views and a central location within Ward 8, but posed major challenges for development, including the need for extensive regrading and structural retaining walls, meeting the city's stringent stormwater management requirements, and demonstrating good faith to surrounding communities that haven't always shared in the District's recent surge of growth and prosperity.

After a first attempt to build multifamily housing on the site stalled, HB, in partnership with the Horning Family Fund (HFF), took a new, community-based approach to developing the site. HFF, the Horning family's charitable foundation, provides $1 million in grants annually to nonprofit organizations working to improve educational and economic outcomes for Ward 8 children and families. In 2010, HFF kicked off the development effort with an extensive feasibility study, including interviews with community members and stakeholders in the adjacent neighborhoods of Fort Stanton and Hillsdale as well as Anacostia as a whole.

The Commons courtyard, with the Terrace Gardens in the left foreground, the Kitchen Terrace at right, and the Healthy Start Playground in the background.



Side façade of the Martha's Table wing.



The Healthy Start Playground.





Kitchen Terrace at night.



This survey identified childcare, education, nutrition, homelessness prevention, and behavioral and family support services as the community's top needs. While there are several public and charter schools nearby, area residents did not have sufficient access to affordable, high-quality daycare for infants and toddlers. To supplement daycare for children of working parents, after-school care for school-age children was also critical. Food security and quality were identified as other issues in Wards 7 and 8, which have historically been underserved by grocery stores and farmers' markets.

With these community needs in mind, a new concept for the site began to emerge. A central "Commons" to provide Ward 8 residents with wrap-around support services—shelter, food, education, health, and family—would be constructed first, with market-rate and affordable housing to follow. The development team sought strategic partners to join the project, advise on space and infrastructure needs, and eventually operate community-serving programs at the Commons.

"It wasn't just co-location, it was about collaboration," said David Roodberg, CEO and president of Horning Brothers. The two organizations that call the Commons home have different missions but a shared vision of supporting the health and well-being of underserved families and children in the District. Community of Hope, which combats homelessness by offering counseling and mental health and family support services, joined the project in 2012. Martha's Table, which focuses on food access and early childhood education, cemented the project in 2014 with its agreement to relocate its administrative headquarters from 14th Street, NW, to the new site.

HB donated the land and development capital; HFF provided $10 million in seed funding. Perkins Eastman Architects created the site master plan, assisted with gaining zoning approval for the project, and developed



Multipurpose room, with large folding door that opens up to the courtyard.

the concept design for the Commons. The development team then selected **cox graae + spack architects** (cg+s) to bring the vision to life. (Note: While the author has worked at both cg+s and Perkins Eastman, he was not involved in the project at either firm.)

Everything at the Commons begins in the Hub, a trapezoidal gathering space at the center of the 57,000-square-foot building's L-shaped plan. **William Spack, AIA**, a founding principal at cg+s, said, "We envisioned the building as a vessel to support the programs...with the Hub as the crossroads." A monumental gathering bleacher/stair dynamically connects the building's two levels and provides ample seating. On Friday nights, the community is invited in for special events, including cooking demonstrations, live music and dance, and fun activities for kids. When the weather is nice, the action spills outside onto the paved Kitchen Terrace, with colorful picnic tables and a view of the Washington Monument.

The adjacent multipurpose space features large, glassy overhead doors, allowing the spaces to be combined for volunteer and community gatherings. A commercial kitchen, the center of the Martha's Table Healthy Eating initiative, produces hundreds of meals each week, both for the daycare/after-care populations at the Commons and for hungry people citywide. The Lobby Market, also accessed from the Hub, offers no-cost shopping (up to once a month for each family) for fresh fruits and vegetables and nutritious pantry staples.

Throughout the interior, the architecture reinforces the mission. The Martha's Table administrative offices, located on the second floor, are accessed via an open mezzanine with views to the Hub and site playgrounds and gardens. As staff members go about their day, they see, hear, and even smell the community-serving activities going on in the kitchen and childcare spaces below.

Circulation and public spaces flow seamlessly, taking advantage of ample daylight from floor-to-ceiling windows that also maximize city views. By contrast, more intimate spaces, including counseling offices and health care rooms in the Community of Hope wing, are screened from view by translucent films that allow light transmission while protecting occupants' privacy.

The interior finish palette emphasizes natural wood textures and industrial metal accents. Where natural wood would not stand up to the building's heavy use, alternative materials including plastic-laminate wall panels and patterned porcelain floor tiles were





The Hub, with the multipurpose room in the background.



Staircase in the Community of Hope wing.

selected. The Hub ceiling is finished in perforated wood veneer acoustical panels for noise control, with streamlined black pendant LED light fixtures.

The building's exterior, clad in masonry and rainscreen panel systems with curtainwall glazing, visually articulates its tripartite program. The south "leg" of the L, composed of two shed-like volumes clad in colorful fiber-cement panels, is home to Community of Hope's 14,000-square-foot space. The opposite leg of the L, faced in a variegated buff-colored brick at the front elevation, houses the classroom spaces of Martha's Table. The main entrance, where the two legs meet, is framed by a full-height, amber-colored wall that acts as both a divider and a portal. Made with weatherproof wood-veneer Parklex accent panels, the wall runs through the Hub and out the back of the building onto the west-facing terrace, where the city views are most spectacular.

The second phase of the project is under way; 42 market-rate townhouses are planned, along with 121 affordable housing units and 13 units that will be supported by Community of Hope to help families transition from homelessness to stability. Once these projects are complete, they will reinforce the role of the Commons as a true anchor of the community.



Classroom corridor in the Martha's Table wing.

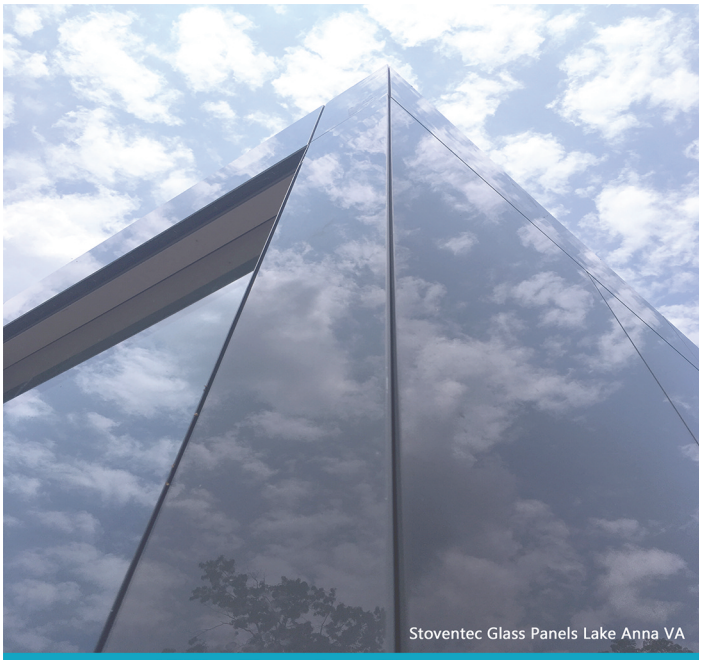




The Commons at Stanton Square
Architect: cox graae + spack architects // Installer: Pillar Construction

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The "Community Garden" room at the Downtown Day Services Center.

Designing for Dignity

Basement Transformed into Welcoming Space for Homeless People

by G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Assoc. AIA

The District of Columbia has a long, albeit discontinuous, history of distinguished civic architecture. In the 1870s, the city won several prestigious awards—including a Medal of Progress at the World Exhibition in Vienna, Austria—for outstanding school design. Between the World Wars, municipal architects designed a number of understated yet elegant buildings to house local government functions. Although the quality of DC public buildings declined dramatically by the late 20th century, over the past decade the city has earned international recognition once again for a series of dazzling new buildings and renovations for its school and library systems (as featured elsewhere in this issue).

Amid such high-profile landmarks, it would be easy to overlook a much more modest recent project that addresses a different civic need. The Downtown Day Services Center (DDSC) provides a wide range of services and support to people who are homeless. Financed by the DC government, the facility is managed by the DowntownDC Business Improvement District (BID) in cooperation with other private and public agencies.

The BID struggled to find a suitable space whose landlord would welcome such a facility. Ultimately, the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, which has a long history of outreach to the homeless population, offered a portion of its basement. It was a

Project: Downtown Day Services Center,
1313 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC

Architects: **Moya Design Partners**
Structural Engineers: **Simpson Gumpertz & Heger**
MEP Engineers: **Engenium Group**
Contractor: **Blue Skye Construction**

All photos © Bob Rives, except as otherwise noted



Lobby.



The central space, with benches facing into the TV lounge.

humble setting: dark and with no direct street presence. The available space, totaling about 7,000 square feet, was highly irregular in plan, comprising two distinct sections connected by a narrow hallway. It also contained outdated mechanical systems that would require a complete overhaul.

"Our main goal from the beginning was to create an oasis in the jungle of downtown DC—a place where the center's clients would feel welcome and at home," said **Paola Moya**, CEO and founder of **Moya Design Partners**, which oversaw the transformation of the space. Not surprisingly, the budget was tight, and much of the money inevitably went toward mechanical and other upgrades that would be invisible to most visitors. At the same time, the program for the DDSC was ambitious, including showers for men, women, and people of other genders; self-service laundry facilities; medical examination rooms; a kitchen; computer stations; and offices for social workers and other staff. Pathways to Housing DC, an organization dedicated to moving homeless people into housing quickly as a first step toward complete reintegration into society, needed several stations for meetings with clients.

The designers set out to rationalize the convoluted space while minimizing its institutional qualities—and distracting clients from the fact that they were in a basement. In doing so, they drew inspiration from domestic and neighborhood environments. "Our big idea was that it should be like coming into a house, then entering into a courtyard or community garden, with supporting spaces surrounding the community garden," explained Moya, whose firm handled not only the interior architecture, but also furniture and fixture selection, as well as graphics and wayfinding.

The client experience begins in a compact but cheerful lobby, enlivened by a neon sign and large-scale images of plants on the wall behind the reception desk. A curving hallway leads to a dense corner that includes the showers, exam rooms, and a barbershop niche where clients can get help with a variety of personal grooming needs. From there, clients may proceed into the "community garden," a surprisingly open and spacious area where they may eat, watch television, or use computers. The kitchen, laundry room, offices, and a conference room line the edges of the airy central space.

That virtual garden is the signature element of the center, and the designers worked hard to make it feel comfortable and even exhilarating. Much of the space is occupied by a series of small, square tables with vivid blue chairs, where clients may eat, read, play chess, or chat. At one end of the room are several benches—





Computer stations.

suggestive of common park benches except for their bright blue color—where clients may sit to watch television. Taking advantage of the relatively high ceiling in this space, the designers introduced an array of hanging plants—artificial, so as not to require undue maintenance—that create a strong impression of being outside. Nestled among the plants are pendant light fixtures that suggest hanging lanterns. These gestures soften the space, thus helping to counteract the institutional atmosphere that the designers sought to avoid.

When the DDSC opened, the BID expected to serve about 80 clients per day. Moya estimates that it is already serving about 120 people daily, and she noted that on one holiday when other centers were closed, it attracted upwards of 150. Those statistics are less important to Moya, however, than the clear qualitative success of the project. "I overheard one person talking to another," she recalled. "'You have to come to the day center,' they said. 'I just feel so loved when I go there, and the space is so beautiful.'"



Basement before renovation.

Photo courtesy of Moya Design Partners



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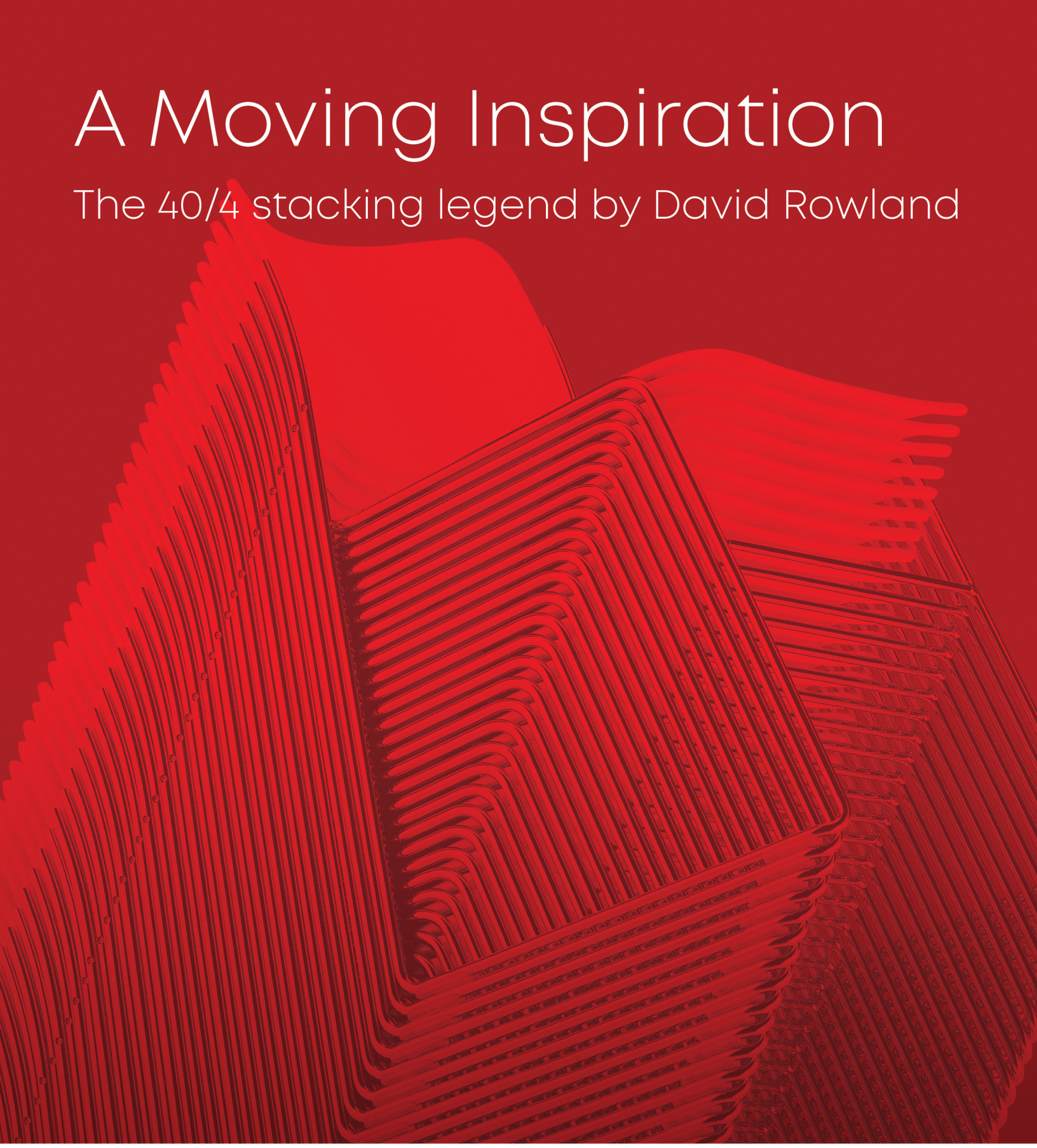
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Pavilion at the Washington Youth Garden, located within the National Arboretum.

Responding to a Growing Need

Architects Design Community Gardens with Flair

by Deane Madsen, Assoc. AIA

Two recent garden projects illustrate how important architecture is at all scales; often it can be more difficult to design less, where smaller overall square footage requires greater attention to the few details afforded on a project. Within the National Arboretum in Northeast DC, the Washington Youth Garden, by **StudioMB**, provides a sturdy shelter for year-round outdoor teaching. In the District's Northwest quadrant, the Twin Oaks Community Garden finds a new home upon a sunny hillside, terraced between accessible pathways by **ISTUDIO**.

Washington Youth Garden

Tucked into a single acre at the National Arboretum's southeastern edge, near where the Anacostia River diverges around Kingman Island, the Washington Youth Garden offers children an outdoor classroom where they can plant, grow, wash, and eat nutritious fruits and vegetables.

Until 2017, the home of the Youth Garden program was a tent, which offered shade and shelter from the rain, but often became a slick mud puddle during and after storms. Recognizing the need for a more solid structure, the Weisberg Foundation—which runs the Washington Youth Garden as a philanthropic tenant within the Arboretum—enlisted StudioMB to come up with a low-budget, high-impact solution that would allow its educational programs to continue to thrive.

Project: Washington Youth Garden Pavilion at the National Arboretum,
3501 New York Avenue, NE, Washington, DC

Architects: **StudioMB**
Structural Engineers: **Ehlert Bryan Consulting Structural Engineers**
Contractor: **Added Dimensions with Roy Thillberg**



Photo © Mark Luthringer



Rain catchment barrels at the Washington Youth Garden.

Photo © Mark Luthringer



Closer view of the pavilion, with the storage shed at left, pictured before the ramp handrail was installed at right.

Photo © Mark Luthringer



Washington Youth Garden Pavilion, with chalkboards integrated into the structure. **Photo © Mark Luthringer**

The brief from the Weisberg Foundation for a new pavilion was relatively straightforward, as **David Bagnoli, AIA, LEED**, a founding principal at StudioMB, recalled: "It needed to be sustainable and durable, and to express the mission of the place visually and in a way that was cost effective. [The Foundation] wanted to make sure that it was spending the dollars on the programs, and not necessarily on the structure."

That cost-consciousness may have arisen from a previous foray into a new youth garden home that had stalled when the project came in around ten times higher than the proposed budget. Although that proposal was well designed, members of the Weisberg Foundation couldn't justify a cost that high. But at the other end of the cost spectrum, the options for prefabricated picnic shelters, while well within budget constraints, weren't meeting the aesthetic aspirations the foundation had for its new venue.

The goals of the Washington Youth Garden include fostering nutritional awareness and understanding of growth cycles, and to that end, StudioMB designed a pavilion using humble materials with relatively simple detailing to allow the mission of the program to come into focus.

Sited beside a wooded part of the arboretum, the youth garden pavilion is set upon a small plinth facing northward, opening to the garden itself to the west. A ramp wraps the western edge of that plinth, and between the columns supporting the large, overhanging roof at the pavilion's southern edge, chalkboards suggest an informal back wall that allows for air circulation and views above and below the writing surfaces. At the east side of the pavilion, a cedar cube offers room for equipment storage and becomes the second wall of the pavilion; a third is suggested by the ramp's handrail, while the northern edge remains open to become an informal stage, raised two steps above grade, for garden talks and demonstrations.

Beyond the basic amenities of the pavilion, the team at StudioMB wanted to use the pavilion itself as another teaching tool. That's where its roof design came into play, according to project architect **Jenna Bolino, AIA**. "We wanted to collect the rainwater, to show all the students that come how it can be reused," she said. "They actually use it for their composting pile and as irrigation for the garden."

The roof is pitched, but inverted, such that a valley slopes downward diagonally from northeast to southwest, in an asymmetrical butterfly configuration that culminates in a rain catchment barrel at its low point. A 14-inch-deep laminated-wood beam runs along that valley, with exposed rafters supporting the roof in the short directions. "It's quite a simple and legible structure for anybody who's not an architect to understand," Bagnoli said. "We really wanted to express the underlying structure of the building so that kids not only would understand the setting and the garden, but also the architecture and how it's built."

Perhaps one of the greatest improvements within the pavilion was one that came as a later-stage suggestion: Potable water flows to an industrial, stainless steel sink next to the storage cube for use as a wash station for produce picked from the garden, allowing students and visitors to sit in the shade and sample what they've grown.



Pavilion at the Twin Oaks Community Garden.

Photo © Dan Snook Photography

Twin Oaks Community Garden

The Twin Oaks Community Garden in Northwest DC had occupied a plot on the property of Powell Elementary School, but as the school expanded (as documented in another article in this issue), room for the garden decreased. **ISTUDIO Architects**, which led the Powell expansion, found a new home for the longstanding community garden on the opposite side of the school, within a DC Department of Parks and Recreation property that is also home to baseball and soccer fields.

The new site, however, presented its own collection of challenges: Set on a south-facing hillside, it was overgrown with non-native kudzu, beneath which was an extensive rat colony. Clearing out those species also meant reestablishing controls to prevent hillside erosion, and, as part of a public park, that slope also had to be accessible and ADA compliant.

"We never start off with the solutions," said ISTUDIO principal **Rick Harlan Schneider, AIA, APA, LEED AP**. "We always start off by listening to the site as well as to the client and what the programmatic needs are."

ISTUDIO's response to the site conditions and programmatic requirements for the community garden ended up involving a substantial landscape architecture component, in the form of angled terraces housed within concrete retaining walls with a zigzagging ramp to connect them. The ramp passes among

Project: Twin Oaks Community Garden,
Upshur Park, 4300 Arkansas Avenue, NW, Washington, DC

Architects: **ISTUDIO Architects**
MEP/F Engineers: **Setty & Associates, Ltd.**
Civil Engineers: **AMT, LLC**
Geotechnical/Hazmat Consultants: **ECS Corporate Services, LLC**
Contractor: **MCN Build**



View of the Twin Oaks Community Garden from above, showing the green roof of the pavilion.



Photo © Dan Snook Photography

planter beds raised 18 to 20 inches to afford access to gardeners of all sizes, ages, and abilities. A shortcut staircase forms the eastern edge of the garden, and a small pavilion sits at the western point of the triangular site, midway up the hill. "We had tilted planes that formed the terraces," Schneider explained, "so we decided to lift a tilted plane up, in essence, to create a green roof pavilion for the gathering space for the gardeners."

Schneider noted that the District has, for many decades, dealt with water issues relating to runoff from impervious surfaces. The last thing he and his team wanted to do was introduce another impervious surface in what was supposed to be a city-friendly environment, hence the decision to provide a green roof. Supported on painted pipe columns, the green roof mitigates storm water runoff while providing shelter beneath it, and it also captures some rainwater for use within the garden. Schneider likened the green roof to an abstraction of lifting up a section of the ground plane. "What you see below is like a root structure," he said. "In many ways, those steel columns and the grid that you see are like the roots of the piece of earth that's been pulled up and suspended in the air."

Playfulness aside, Schneider is serious about emphasizing the community aspect of the new Twin Oaks garden. "It's a form of equitable design to say this place is accessible, not just to people who are a very able-bodied or may be of a certain socio-economic status in the city," he said. "When you create healthier, more beautiful buildings that are accessible, you're making more robust and resilient infrastructure. And that's how you contribute to creating more resilient communities."



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View outward from the Twin Oaks Community Garden Pavilion.





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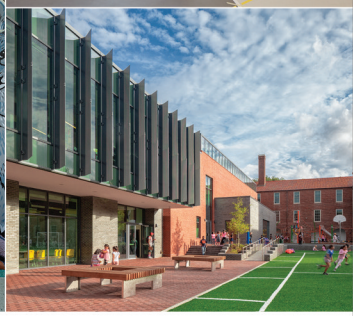
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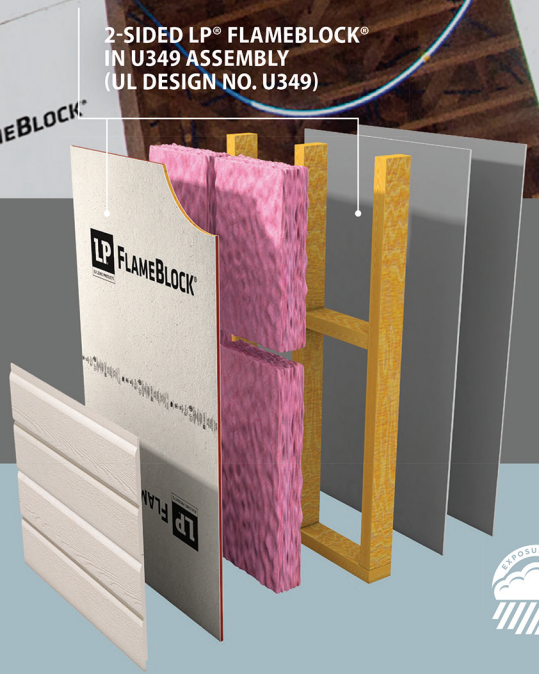
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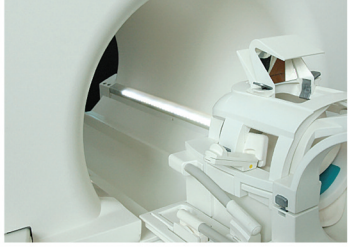
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